

Turkish forces kill 18 Kurdish rebels

DIYARBAKIR (R) — Turkish security forces killed 18 Kurdish guerrillas in fighting in the southeast of the country over the weekend, military officials said on Sunday. The Kurdish Labour Party (PKK) rebels killed one member of the security forces in the clash as part of a helicopter-backed offensive through the mountains of Sirnak province, that began on Saturday. Turkey's army has stepped up its drive against the PKK in recent weeks, seeking to take advantage of potential disorder among the guerrillas following the arrest of their leader Abdullah Ocalan in Italy last month. More than 29,000 people have been killed in 14 years of fighting between security forces and the PKK, which wants self-rule for mainly-Kurdish southeast Turkey.

Jordan Times

An independent Arab political daily published by the Jordan Press Foundation
جوردان تايمز يومية سياسية مستقلة عن المؤسسة الصحفية الأردنية «الراي»

Palestinian named as martyr to Iraq cause

BAGHDAD (R) — Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein on Sunday praised a Palestinian who died during Arab protests against U.S.-led strikes on Baghdad and named him a martyr to the Iraqi cause. "President Saddam Hussein ordered to consider Arab Palestinian citizen Mohammad Ahmad Dawood who fell martyr as a result of confrontation with Zionist occupation forces during pro-Iraq protests...as martyr of Umm Al Maarik," the Iraqi News Agency (INA) said. INA also quoted member of the ruling Baath Party Abdul-Ghani Abdul Ghafour as saying "the order covers similar cases that take place during pro-Iraq protests and activities all over the Arab World. The United States and Britain launched a campaign of strikes against Iraq on Dec. 17 in a dispute over post-Gulf war weapons inspections."

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Regent: Sanctions humanly unacceptable, politically futile Parliamentarians should take effective steps to end Iraqi suffering APU condemns strikes against Iraq, calls on Arabs to lift sanctions

By Caroline Faraj

AMMAN — HRH Crown Prince Hassan, the Regent, Sunday told a meeting of Arab parliamentarians demanding an end to U.N. economic sanctions on Iraq that Jordan remained committed to principles of international legitimacy but rejected the idea of imposing embargoes on any state.

"This unfair policy, which is directed against the basic rights of Man's existence, cannot accomplish its objectives; for it is quite unacceptable on humanitarian grounds and is futile from a political perspective," the Crown Prince told the opening session of a one-day emergency meeting of the Arab Parliamentary Union (APU) in Amman.

The Regent, who gave the conference's keynote speech, also focused on the suffering of ordinary Iraqis and said the sanctions — imposed on Iraq after it invaded Kuwait in August 1990 — were not an effective tool to enforce the consensus of the international community on Iraq.

"The Iraqi people, who have suffered a great deal, should not be left without a programme of humanitarian aid which secures their needs and eases their suffering which is free from political objectives," he said.

As the Crown Prince was about to leave the hall, an Iraqi delegate stood up and, referring to a banner of solidarity with the Iraqi people, said the delegation did come not to Amman to hear "Arab words of sympathy but wanted a united Arab stand against Washington and London."

In an apparent response, Prince Hassan told reporters outside the conference hall that the emergency meeting, attended by 16 APU members, except for Kuwait, should not be held hostage to emotions.



HRH Crown Prince Hassan, the Regent, on Sunday delivers the opening speech at a one-day emergency meeting of the Arab Parliamentary Union held in Amman (photo by Youssef 'Al Ailan)

"The conference is not meant to be governed by emotions, rather, it is held at the level of Arab states and their elected institutions...to reflect the will of the Arab people and to take effective steps to end the suffering of the Iraqi people," he said.

"We hope that the conference does not miss another opportunity to take effective measures to help the Iraqis and their interests because of emotions," Prince Hassan said.

Before delivering his speech, Prince Hassan asked the audience to recite Al Fatiha on Arab and Muslim martyrs.

(Continued on page 12)

APU decides to send parliamentarians to Iraq to 'assess impact of aggression'

By Caroline Faraj

AMMAN — Arab parliamentarians on Sunday strongly condemned the four-day U.S.-British bombardment of Iraq, and called on their governments to work for the lifting of U.N. sanctions imposed on that country since its invasion of Kuwait in 1990.

Delegates from 16 members of the Arab Parliamentary Union (APU) demanded the U.N. Security Council should ensure that such military action will not happen again.

They also decided to send an Arab parliamentary delegation to Iraq to "declare its support for the country and assess the impact of the U.S.-British aggression."

The one-day emergency meeting of the APU, which was opened by His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan, the Regent, focused on the human dimension of the Iraqi crisis, and its effect on the stability of the region.

Earlier in the session, Iraq's Parliament Speaker Saadoun Hammadi said that Arab countries should come to the rescue of Iraq by ending their compliance with U.N. sanctions.

"We don't need sympathy or humanitarian assistance," he said. "All what we want is a unified Arab stand towards lifting the sanctions that are imposed on Iraq."

"Talk about the siege on Iraq should be a practical talk. The important step is that Arab countries lift the embargo and avoid rhetoric that leads nowhere," he added.

Hammadi also objected to a banner on the hall of the meeting which reads, "APU support the Iraqi people."

"There is no difference between Iraq and its people," he said. "Therefore, we reject the foreign media differentiating between Iraq and its people," said Hammadi.

He pointed out that pro-Iraq demonstrations in the Arab World were "a clear witness that the Arab people support Iraq," but at the same he regretted the fact that none of the parliamentarians condemned the U.S.-UK aggression in their opening speeches.

In mostly emotional speeches, Arab parliamentarians condemned the four-day strikes on Iraq saying they jeopardised regional peace and increased the hardship on the Iraqi people reeling under the impact of the eight-year-old sanctions.

"The aggression on Iraq represents a dangerous policy which is against international law and regional and international security," Fathi Srour, the head of the APU and speaker of Egypt's parliament, told the gathering.

The APU emergency meeting was hastily convened at the request of Jordan's Lower House of Parliament to rally popular support for Iraq in the wake of widespread popular Arab frustration across the region against this month's strikes on Baghdad.

Thousands of demonstrators in Arab capitals like Damascus, Amman, Cairo and Rabat spilled out into the streets to express fury over the attacks.

Despite the popular Arab frustration at the air strikes, all Arab governments have so far adhered to the sanctions.

(Continued on page 12)



Deputies from the United Arab Emirates recite surat Al Fatiha at the opening ceremony of an emergency session of the Arab Parliamentary Union in Amman on Sunday (Reuters photo)

APU resolutions

FOLLOWING ARE the main resolutions made by the Arab Parliamentary Union during its one-day emergency session on Sunday:

— The APU strongly condemns the U.S.-British aggression on Iraq and calls on the U.N. Security Council to ensure that such aggression is not repeated. It also supports the right of Iraq to claim compensation for financial and human losses.

— The APU expresses full solidarity with the unity, independence and sovereignty of Iraq and voices total rejection of all forms of regional and international intervention in its internal affairs.

— It calls on Arab governments to work towards lifting the embargo on Iraq and putting an end to the suffering of the Iraqi people.

— The APU calls on Arab parliaments to

urge their governments to lift the embargo on Iraq.

— The APU calls for abolishing the no-fly-zones in southern and northern Iraq, noting that the decision to establish such no-fly zones has no legal grounds, and is not based on any U.N. resolution. Moreover, it constitutes an infringement of the Iraqi sovereignty and poses a threat to the country's territorial integrity.

— It calls for the convening of an urgent Arab summit to adopt the necessary decisions to support Iraq and to study the latest developments in the Arab World and the threats to pan-Arab security.

— The APU decides to send an Arab parliamentary delegation to Baghdad in a show of solidarity with Iraq.

— The APU hails the Jordanian parliament's decision to lift the embargo on Iraq.

Netanyahu critic drops out, Likud lawmaker announces bid

Sharon backs Netanyahu

TEL AVIV (AP) — Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on Sunday cleared a major political hurdle in his bid for re-election when a top Likud ally dropped out of the race. However, a challenge to Netanyahu's leadership from within was announced by Uzi Landau, 55, chairman of the powerful Knesset foreign affairs and defence committee.

Landau is unlikely to unseat Netanyahu, and the Netanyahu critic in Likud was seen as having the best chance, Jerusalem Mayor Ehud Olmert, took himself out of the race Sunday.

Olmert, a hawk who has campaigned for building a Jewish-Ghettos settlement in Arab east Jerusalem, was the only party member with enough stature and following to stand to have a fighting chance against Netanyahu.

However, Olmert reportedly took the decision to bow out after failing to enlist the support of Defence Minister Yitzhak Mordechai, who is popular among the Sephardim or Jews from Middle East countries.

The lack of a serious challenge so far strengthened Netanyahu's chances to again

be the party's candidate for re-election.

The announcements came in advance of the Likud central committee meeting later Sunday. The panel was to set the stage for selecting a party leader and begin the process of choosing the list of candidates for the Knesset.

The Likud candidate is expected to face Labour Party leader Ehud Barak in elections, the date for which is expected to be set by parliament soon. But there are also several candidates forming centrist parties that could complicate the picture.

Landau represents the right wing within Likud that has been dismayed by Netanyahu's flip-flops on policy issues and political manoeuvring designed to keep his six-party coalition in power.

"Likud has become the party of the moment with a leader who changes course according to the direction of the wind. Such victory is not a genuine victory," Landau told a Tel Aviv press conference where he announced his candidacy.

(Continued on page 12)

Iraq threatening to expel U.N. humanitarian aid workers

BAGHDAD (AP) — Iraq increased the pressure in its confrontation with the United Nations Sunday, saying it would reject an extension of a U.N.-monitored programme that feeds civilians and order aid monitors to leave.

Iraqi Trade Minister Mohammad Mehdi Saleh did not say when Baghdad would ask the U.N. staff to depart. The latest phase of the U.N.-approved oil-for-food deal expires at the end of April.

The tough talk came only a day after Iraq said it would fire on U.S. and British warplanes

patrolling a no-fly zone imposed after the 1991 Gulf war.

It also came shortly before a group of Arab legislators meeting in Amman strongly condemned last week's U.S.-British attacks as "unjust aggression" on Iraq. They also called on their governments to work on the lifting of the U.N. trade embargo which has crippled the country's economy.

The oil-for-food deal brings crucial supplies such as flour, lentils, rice sugar and medicine to families suffering under eight-years of U.N. sanctions.

It is unlikely that Iraq would cancel the deal without an easing of the embargo.

Iraq, however, has long feared that the humanitarian programme is ending support for an easing of the sanctions on humanitarian grounds.

"Iraq refuses the continuation of this project and demands the lifting of sanctions," Saleh said. "This means the ouster of U.N. teams which supervise it."

About 400 U.N. workers monitor the oil-for-food deal to ensure that the Iraqi government does not divert any of the

money or aid and use it for its own purposes. The deal began in December 1996.

The latest six-month phase allows Iraq to sell \$5.2 billion in oil to buy needed supplies. About 3 per cent of that money is used to pay the humanitarian aid monitors, the expenses needed to administer the programme and to fund the work of weapons inspectors in Iraq. Another 30 per cent goes to compensate victims of Iraq's 1990 invasion of Kuwait and the subsequent Gulf war.

"Iraq is bearing huge expenses which it pays to these [U.N.]

personnel and they do nothing apart from verifying that the imports have reached Iraqi ports," Saleh said in an interview with Associated Press Television News.

The United States and Britain began four days of punishing air strikes on Dec. 16 after the weapons inspectors released a report saying that Baghdad was blocking their work.

Iraq has said it will not allow the U.N. arms monitors to resume their work.

(Continued on page 12)

Saudi Arabia reportedly lobbies for postponement of Arab League foreign ministers meeting on Iraq

Agencies

SAUDI ARABIA is lobbying to postpone this week's emergency meeting of Arab foreign ministers scheduled to discuss the showdown between the United States and Iraq, Arab diplomats said Sunday.

The meeting, due to be held Wednesday in the Egyptian capital, Cairo, was called by Arab League Secretary-General Esmat Abdul Meguid in the wake of last week's U.S.-British military attacks on Iraq.

Abdul Meguid said Sunday that 14 out of the 22 Arab for-

eign ministers have accepted his invitation to attend the meeting.

His diplomatic initiative followed a call by Yemen's President Ali Abdullah Saleh for an Arab summit to forge a united Arab position after the air attacks.

But Arab diplomats, speaking on condition of anonymity, said Saudi Arabia sent its chief diplomat, Prince Saud Al Faisal, to Cairo Sunday to ask Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak to back its demand for putting off the meeting until the end of the Muslim

Holy Month Ramadan in mid-January.

Egyptian officials would not confirm that the Saudi envoy visited Egypt.

Iraq wants the Cairo meeting to back its demand for the lifting of the crippling U.N. economic sanctions which were imposed after Iraq's invasion of Kuwait in 1990.

Saudi Arabia is apparently worried that the Arab states may give Iraq the much needed backing in its confrontation with the United States and Britain. Egypt's influential Al Ahram newspaper reported

Sunday that the Gulf states of Qatar and the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia's allies, will send their foreign ministers to the meeting in Cairo, for the meeting.

Also on Sunday, Iraq submitted a draft resolution to a meeting of Arab legislators in Jordan urging Arab nations to ignore the U.N. sanctions on Iraq and demanding that all foreign troops be pulled out of the Gulf.

Meanwhile, Iraqi Foreign Minister Mohammad Saeed Al Sahhaf arrived in Yemen on Sunday amid a flurry of Arab

meetings about this month's U.S. and British military strikes against Baghdad.

A Yemeni official said Sahhaf was scheduled to deliver a message from President Saddam Hussein to his Yemeni counterpart Ali Abdullah Saleh. "He [Sahhaf] was due to meet President Saleh to deliver a message from President Saddam Hussein," the official told Reuters.

Sahhaf was on his way to Cairo for Wednesday's meeting of Arab foreign ministers.

(Continued on page 12)

Israeli ultra-Orthodox MPs accuse secular activists of anti-Semitism

TEL AVIV (AFP) — Ultra-Orthodox members of the Israeli parliament accused secular activists Sunday of fostering anti-Semitism in their campaign to end exemption from military service for religious Jews and vowed legal action.

Ultra-Orthodox MPs have been particularly incensed by a poster campaign by a group known as Free Nation which dubbed religious Jews exempted from military service as "evaders."

A poster distributed by the group features a picture of two soldiers overlooking a cemetery and bears the legend: "This year 22 soldiers were killed in Lebanon and none of the

ultra-Orthodox evaders were killed while studying the Torah [the Jewish holy scriptures]."

"This is pure anti-Semitism," Yitzhak Cohen, an MP from the ultra-Orthodox Shas party, told the Hebrew daily Yediot Aharonot.

"This reminds me of what an entire nation did, using a similar technique, to prepare the grounds for the elimination of six million Jews in the Holocaust."

Cohen lost a brother in one of Israel's wars and vowed to sue the group for slander and incitement to violence over the slur on the country's ultra-Orthodox community.

"Having lost a brother

who gave his blood for the nation, I decided to prosecute Free Nation. I will see them in court," he said.

But Free Nation's secretary-general, Amnon Yakuteli, insisted that the group's campaign was not directed against those who fulfil their obligations to the state.

"We are not talking about the entire ultra-Orthodox community, but about those who only take from the state and don't give," said Yakuteli.

"It's time we exposed the facts about the ultra-Orthodox population. We serve in the army, we have to pay our own university fees etc. We are campaigning to separate religion from funds,"

he said. Around 30,000 ultra-Orthodox currently enjoy exemption from military service to pursue state-subsidised study of the Torah.

The exemptions are accorded under a "status quo" understanding reached between the state and religious authorities shortly after the creation of Israel in 1948.

Initially the practice involved just a few hundred men, but in recent years the figure has reached about 3,000 potential recruits a year.

And since seminary studies can last a lifetime for the most religious, the exemptions currently affect some 30,000 men.

The exemptions have long irritated Israel's secular majority but their frustration has grown sharply in recent years as ultra-Orthodox political parties have entered national and local governments and funnelled increasing amounts of public money into their religious and social institutions.

Earlier this month Israel's supreme court ruled that the exemptions were illegal and gave parliament one year to codify the practice.

An attempt by the opposition Labour Party in July to pass legislation ending the exemptions was defeated by the ruling coalition of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.



Crown Prince hosts iftar: His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan, Regent, Sunday hosted an iftar banquet for dignitaries from the governorates of Irbid, Jerash, Ajloun and Mafrq at the Jordan University of Science and Technology. Attending the banquet were Prime Minister Faysal Tarawneh, Royal family members, His Majesty King Hussein's advisers, governors of Irbid, Jerash, Ajloun and Mafrq. The Regent and the audience also performed the maghrabi prayers (Petra photo)

Arab states face serious water crunch in future

By Kinda Jayoush
Reuters

BEIRUT — Arab countries will grapple with serious water shortages in the coming two decades, a United Nations official said in an interview.

"The region is heading for a period of increased serious demand on water during the next 20 to 25 years," said Omar Touqan, officer in charge of energy and natural resources at the U.N. Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA).

"Water reservoirs will not meet requirements and it will be necessary to find new water resources. This issue has raised concerns all over the region," he told Reuters.

According to statistics used by ESCWA, demand for water for domestic, industrial and agricul-

tural purposes is expected to rise to about 228 billion cubic metres (bcm) in 2025 from 170 bcm forecast in 2000. Demand stood at 140.4 bcm in 1990.

The ESCWA region, which comprises 13 countries from Egypt to the Gulf excluding Israel, has an arid to semi-arid climate.

Touqan said high population growth, the need for increased food production and industrial development were the main reasons for the rise in demand for water.

"Food production and population increase will eventually result in the full utilisation of surface water in countries such as Iraq, Lebanon and Syria and the depletion of groundwater reserves in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries and Yemen."

The region, where many countries still depend on seasonal rainfall to irrigate products vital to their economies, suffered in 1988 from drought and expects a similar dry spell in 1999.

In 1997, Iraq was the richest in surface water with 60.85 bcm, followed by Egypt with 55.50 bcm and Syria at 16.38 bcm.

Total surface water in ESCWA countries was 142.6 bcm while consumption was 147 bcm in 1997. Consumption included ground and desalinated waters.

The region's population more than doubled from 1970 to 1997 to 151 million and is projected to reach 233 million in 2015.

Touqan said countries of the region had resorted to water desalination, recycling of drainage and drilling for groundwater to slake their increasing demand.

"Saudi Arabia is one of the countries that depend on water desalination, but that is an expensive option for countries other than the oil-rich GCC states."

The ESCWA region is the world leader in desalination of sea and brackish water, with output reaching 1.86 bcm in 1997, most of it in GCC countries, compared with 2.1 bcm in the entire Arab World, he said.

Saudi Arabia ranked first among the region's countries with 795 bcm desalinated in 1997. Syria topped the list of those reusing drainage and wastewater when it recycled 1.45 bcm in 1997.

Water shortages will have a serious impact on social and economic development and ESCWA states should start adopting measures to solve the looming crisis, Touqan said.

"Jordan is one of the countries where not everyone has a 24-hour water supply," he said.

Jordan is evaluating plans for the desalination of brackish groundwater with capacities of five bcm and 40 bcm to be produced by the years 2005 and 2020 respectively. Its surface water was 475 bcm in 1997.

States in the region, he said, should rehabilitate the water infrastructure to reduce leakage, plan desalination and effective pricing policies, and use water-saving technology to alleviate the shortages.

"Rational use of water in all sectors, especially agriculture, is a priority that must be addressed immediately in order to reduce the gap between supply and demand in the future."

NEWS IN BRIEF

Zeroual calls for fair poll competition

ALGIERS (R) — Algerian President Liamine Zeroual on Sunday urged his country's politicians to play fair in the presidential election planned for April. "I renew my appeal to political parties to contribute to ensuring a fair competition between all candidates for the presidential election," said Zeroual, addressing a gathering by judges and government officials to mark the beginning of the judiciary year. He also called for respect of the judiciary independence to guarantee a strong state of law. "A state of law is the foundation of a democratic society," he said. His remarks were broadcast by state-run radio.

S. Arabia denies it tried to kill Ben Laden

RIYADH (AP) — Saudi Arabia on Sunday denied reports that a senior government official had plotted to assassinate Saudi dissident Osama Ben Laden. "These accusations are false and have no basis in reality," the Saudi Press Agency quoted an official as saying. The official's name was not given. Ben Laden accused the governor of the Saudi capital of Riyadh, Prince Salman Ben Abdul Aziz, of plotting his assassination, the independent Pakistani newspaper The News reported Saturday. Ben Laden said the governor offered about \$267,000 for his death, according to the English-language newspaper.

Official criticises judiciary over beatings

TEHRAN (R) — An Iranian official criticised the country's conservative judiciary on Sunday for failing to try suspects being held on charges of attacking two members of President Mohammad Khatami's government. The Iranian news agency IRNA quoted Ashraf Borujerdi, in charge of women's affairs at the interior ministry, as saying that suspects accused of beating up Culture and Islamic Guidance Minister Ataollah Mohajerani and assaulting Vice-President Abdullah Nouri had been held since September. "Although the assaults have been identified and arrested... no verdict has been issued against them yet," IRNA quoted Borujerdi as telling a women's gathering in Tehran.

'Saddam Man of All Years' — weekly

BAGHDAD (AP) — An Iraqi weekly on Sunday named President Saddam Hussein Man of All Years because of his courage and popularity among the Iraqi people. "He alone, and nobody else lives in our hearts and symbolises our dignity and pride," said Al Musawir Al Arabi weekly in a front-page editorial. A picture of Saddam, wearing a cowboy hat and holding an AK-47 assault rifle, appeared next to the editorial. "Who has the courage to keep the whole world busy," said the editorial, adding that Saddam enjoyed "patience and forgiveness" and "does not fear but the creator."

Tribesmen block workers from going to oil fields in Yemen

SANAA (AP) — Tribesmen on Sunday prevented workers from repairing a damaged oil pipeline that they blew up two days earlier in north-eastern Yemen, tribal leaders said.

Armed men asked a group of technicians working for the American Hunt Oil Co. not to repair the pipeline in the Marib province, 170 kilometres northeast of the capital, Sanaa, said the tribal leaders, speaking on customary condition of anonymity. They said the tribesmen did not use force.

Tribesmen, who have been demanding that the government give them a percentage of the oil prof-

its, also blocked labourers from heading to work in other oil fields in the Marib province.

The official Al Ayam newspaper reported Sunday that tribesmen blew up the Hunt oil pipeline Friday and tribal leaders said fire was still raging Sunday. Hunt officials could not be immediately reached to give an assessment of the damage.

A similar explosion in the past resulted in a loss of 1,500 barrels of oil a day. Friday's blast was the latest attack on oil and gas pipelines since June when tribesmen and city residents protested a 40 per cent rise in the price gasoline, kerosene and cook-

ing gas to meet demands by the International Monetary Fund. Tribesmen are also demanding that the government build power plants and a water distribution system in their region.

Large parts of Yemen are lawless, inhabited by tribes who do not hesitate to use firearms to settle scores with rivals or to express discontent with the government.

Hunt Oil Company's oil field concession in Marib produces 165,000 barrels per day. The company employs 1,300 Yemeni staff in addition to 30 foreign workers.

Turkish PM-designate due to start talks on new government

ANKARA (AFP) — Turkey's prime minister-designate, Yilmaz Erez, begins a round of meetings Monday to assess his chances of forming a new coalition government, his staff said Sunday.

Turkey has been without a government since parliament toppled Prime Minister Mesut Yilmaz on Nov. 25 for alleged links with organised crime.

President Suleyman Demirel asked Erez to form a government after previous attempts failed.

Erez, 54, minister of industry and commerce, was expected to meet Recai Kutan, leader of the Virtue Party, an Islamist group that holds the most seats in the 550-member parliament, and was also holding talks with Yilmaz, outgoing premier and leader of the Motherland Party.

Erez, an independent politician not linked to any of the parties, was also expected to meet Bulent Ecevit, leader of the Democratic Left Party (DSP), who has already failed to form a new administration.

Erez will be attempting to form the 56th government in the 75-year history of the Turkish Republic, and the fourth since elections in 1995.

The premier-designate has also asked to meet former premier Tansu Ciller, who leads the conservative True Path Party (DYP), but no date has yet been fixed for the meeting.

However Ciller has said she is opposed to a government formed by Erez, an old rival, and is understood to want the job of prime minister again herself.

Ciller and Erez have had bad

relations in the past. Although elected to parliament on DYP's ticket in December 1995, Erez quit the party in 1997 after feuding with Ciller, who previously served as Turkey's first woman prime minister.

Neither Virtue nor the Republican Populist Party have announced whether they would back Erez's bid. But he has already earned tacit support from Yilmaz, and Ecevit has also said his party "will not complicate Erez's task."

On Tuesday, Erez will also meet the leader of the leftist Republican Populist Party, Deniz Baykal.

If a government is not formed by Jan. 10, President Demirel, under Turkish law, can form an interim government until legislative elections are held on April 18.

JORDAN TELEVISION

Tel. 4773111-19

PROGRAMME TWO

15:10Cartoon — Batman
15:30 Children drama — David Copper Field
16:00 Des Chiffres Et Des Lettres
16:30Ch. 2 links with Ch. 1
17:00Thalassa
18:15Omar Ben Abdul Aziz
19:00Le Journal
19:15Words of Wisdom
19:30News headlines
19:33The Parenthood
20:00Doc — Islamic Heritage and Art
20:30Drama — Big Sky
21:30Encounter
22:00News in English
22:30Drama — The Fix
23:30 Comedy — Perfect Stranger
23:59End of T.X.

PRAYER TIMES

05:07Fajr
06:30(Sunrise) Duha
11:37Dhuhr
14:21'Asr
16:44Maghreb
18:07Isha

CHURCHES

St. Mary of Nazareth Church
Sweith, Tel. 5920740
Assemblies of God Church Tel.
4632785
St. Joseph Church Tel. 4624590
Terra Sancta Church Tel.
4622366
Anglican Church Tel.

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Tel. 4773111-19

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PRAYER TIMES

05:07Fajr
06:30(Sunrise) Duha
11:37Dhuhr
14:21'Asr
16:44Maghreb
18:07Isha

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St. Joseph Church Tel. 4624590
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4622366
Anglican Church Tel.

JORDAN TIMES DAILY GUIDE AND CALENDAR

to partly cloudy. Scattered showers are expected in the afternoon and winds southeasterly moderate. In Aqaba, skies will be partly cloudy, rainy, winds northerly moderate, and seas calm.

Min./Max. temp.
Amman04/13
Aqaba05/14
Deserts09/19
Jordan Valley10/19

Yesterday's high temperatures:
Amman 16 Aqaba 20 Humidity readings: Amman 39 per cent, Aqaba 50 per cent.

Following are the temperatures expected today in the following areas:
Ajloun03/09
Jerash05/15
Um Qays05/15
Madaba04/13
Petra05/14
Dead Sea10/21

WEATHER

Bulletin: Meteorology by the Department of Supply
Temperatures are expected to drop slightly, clouds appearing at different altitudes, and skies cloudy

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

NIGHT DUTY
AMMAN:
Dr. Nidal Dahleh5827195
Dr. Said Tawfiq4788285
Dr. Hana Mansour4750197
Dr. Afif Shaker4898863

AMMAN:
Firas Pharmacy5661912
Al Salam Pharmacy4636730
Mayadah Pharmacy5537004
Rula Al Dawa Pharmacy5536169

IRBID:
Dr. Ali Shugairi(02)710069
Fou'ad Pharmacy(02)75360

ZARQA:
Dr. Salah Saffarini(09)17565
Palestine Pharmacy(09)983562

EMERGENCIES

Food Control Centre4637111
Civil Defence Department5661111
Civil Defence Immediate Rescue4630341
Civil Defence Emergency199
Rescue Police192, 4621111, 4637777
Fire Brigade4617101
Blood Bank4775121
Highway Police5343402
Traffic Police4896390
Public Security Dept.4630321
Hotel Complaints5605800
Price Complaints5661176
Water & Sewerage Complaints4897467
Amman Municipality Complaints4787111

Telephone Information (directory assistance)121
Overseas Calls0132
Central Amman Telephone Repairs4632101
Abdali Tel. Repairs5661101
Jordan Television4773111

Radio Jordan4774111
Water Authority5680100
J. Electricity Authority5815615
Electric Power Co.4636381
RJ Flight Information44-53200
Queen Alia Int. Airport44-53200

HOSPITALS

AMMAN:
The Arab Centre for Heart and Special Surgery5921199
The Islamic, Abdli5666134/7
Husseini Medical Centre5856856
Luzmila4630195
Khalidi Maternity4644281/6
Akkleh Maternity464241/2
Jabal Amman Maternity4642362
Malhas, I. Amman4636140
Palestine, Shmeisani5607071
Shameisani Hospital5607431
Jordan Hospital5607550
University Hospital5353444
Al-Muasher Hospital5667227/9
Al-Ahli, Abdali5664164/6
Italian, Al-Muhajreen4771101/3
Al-Bashir4775111/26
Army, Marka4891611/15
Queen Alia Hospital5157100
Arnal Hospital5607155
Al Amal Cancer Centre5353000

ZARQA:
Zarqa Govt. Hospital(09)983323
Zarqa National Hospital(09)900560
Ibn Sina Hospital(09)986731
Al Hikma Modern Hospital(09)990990
16:20

IRBID:
Princess Basma Hospital(02)75555
Roman Catholic Hospital(02)72275
Ibn Al Nafies Hospital(02)7101372, (02)7103101
Rosary Sisters Hospital(02)7102831, (02)7102011
Speciality Hospital(02)7103100

AQABA:
Princess Haya Hospital(03)2014111

FOR THE TRAVELLER

QUEEN ALIA INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

This information is supplied by Royal Jordanian (RJ) information department at the Queen Alia International Airport Tel. (44)53300-5, where it should always be verified. Information on other flights can be supplied on phone 44 (52700). Information on Royal Wings flights can be supplied on phone 4875201-5

ARRIVALS

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights
07:15Sanaa (RJ)
08:30Damascus (RJ)
08:35Jeddah (RJ)
08:50Dubai, Abu Dhabi (RJ)
09:30New Delhi (RJ)
10:05Beirut (RJ)
16:20Cairo (RJ)

16:25London (RJ)
16:45 New York, Amsterdam (RJ)
18:05Kuwait (RJ)
18:35Casablanca, Tunis (RJ)
19:45Rome (add) (RJ)
20:30Bangkok, Sharjah (RJ)
00:15Tel Aviv (add) (RJ)
03:00Jakarta, Kuala Lumpur (RJ)

Other Flights
08:20Alexandria (BA)
09:30Cairo (MS)
10:00Khartoum (SD)
13:20Bahrain (GF)
14:45Doha (QR)
15:05Vienna (OS)
15:25Dubai, Abu Dhabi (EK)
17:50Istanbul (SD)
18:40Beirut (ME)
19:15Frankfurt (LH)
22:25Amsterdam (KL)
01:25Athens (OA)

Royal Wings (RW)
09:30Aqaba (arriving at QAIA) (RW)
10:10 Aqaba (arriving at Marka Airport) (RW)
16:00 Aqaba (arriving at Marka Airport) (RW)
10:50 Aqaba (arriving at Marka Airport) (RW)
17:50 Gaza (arriving at QAIA) (RW)
00:15 Tel Aviv (arriving at QAIA) (RW)

Other Flights
06:00Istanbul (TK)
07:25Paris (AF)
09:05London (BA)
10:30Cairo (MS)
11:05Istanbul (SD)
14:10Bahrain (GF)
15:30Vienna (OS)
16:30Doha (QR)
18:50Khartoum (SD)
20:00Beirut (ME)
23:10Tel Aviv (LY)
02:25Amsterdam (KL)
02:45Athens (OA)

Royal Wings (RW)
07:00 Aqaba (from Marka Airport) (RW)
08:30 Aqaba (from Marka Airport) (RW)
13:30 Gaza (from Marka Airport) (RW)
20:30Aqaba (from QAIA) (RW)
22:00Tel Aviv (from QAIA) (RW)

DEPARTURES

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights
06:30Beirut (RJ)
10:30Frankfurt, London (RJ)
11:00 Amsterdam, Chicago (RJ)
11:15Rome (add) (RJ)
12:05Kuwait (RJ)
12:30Cairo (RJ)
20:15Bahrain, Doha (RJ)
20:45Abu Dhabi (RJ)
21:15Muscat, Dhaka (RJ)
21:20Damascus (RJ)
22:00Tel Aviv (add) (RJ)
22:45Sanaa (RJ)
01:15Tehran (RJ)

Other Flights
06:00Istanbul (TK)
07:25Paris (AF)
09:05London (BA)
10:30Cairo (MS)
11:05Istanbul (SD)
14:10Bahrain (GF)
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13:30 Gaza (from Marka Airport) (RW)
20:30Aqaba (from QAIA) (RW)
22:00Tel Aviv (from QAIA) (RW)

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By Muntaz Marjan

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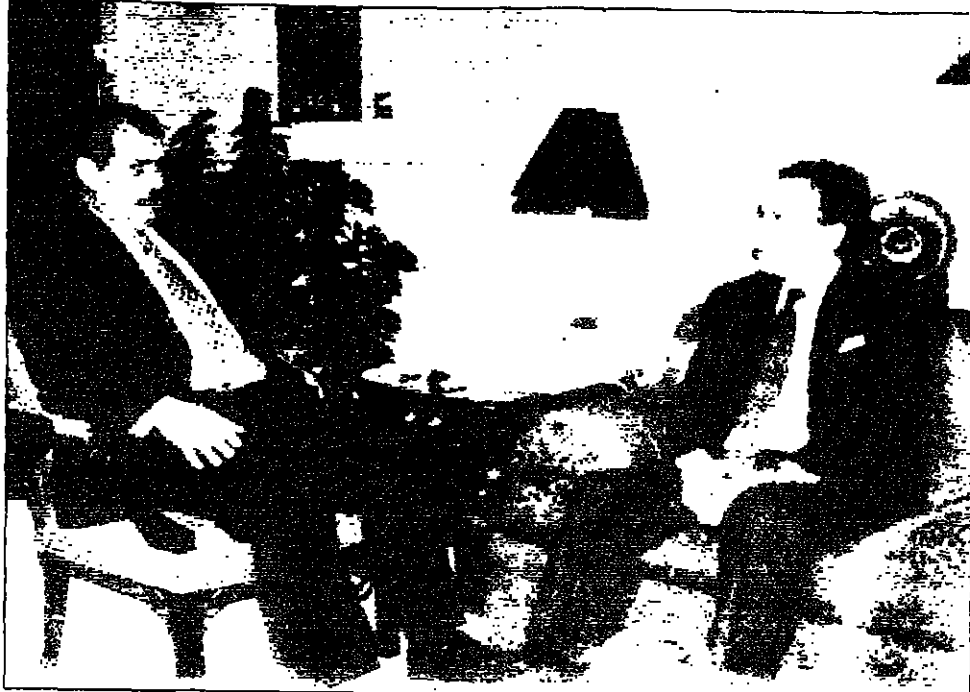
Tarawneh, Specter discuss ties, peace process, Iraq

AMMAN (J.T.) — Prime Minister Fayez Tarawneh discussed on Sunday with an American delegation, led by Senator Arlen Specter, bilateral relations, the latest deadlock in the Middle East peace process and the crisis in Iraq.

The prime minister said that Jordan has called for ending the sanctions regime imposed on the Iraqi people since 1991 and resolving all crises in a peaceful manner through dialogue.

Tarawneh briefed the American delegation on the aspects of political development in the Kingdom, the economic reform programme and the ongoing restructuring process of different sectors.

The prime minister told the delegation that Jordan highly appreciates the positive role played by the U.S. Senate in endorsing the economic aid programme to the Kingdom, which the U.S. administration has pledged to increase.



Prime Minister Fayez Tarawneh and U.S. Senator Arlen Specter Sunday discuss bilateral relations, the latest deadlock in the Middle East peace process and the Iraqi crisis (Petra photo)

During a recent visit to Jordan, U.S. Secretary of State Madeline Albright said the administration will work with Congress to obtain \$200 million in additional security assistance to Jordan. Jordan receives an annual U.S. assistance package of \$225 million — divided into \$150 million in economic assistance and \$75 in military aid.

Specter, head of the War Veterans Committee and a member of the influential Senate Appropriations

Committee, expressed admiration for the courageous role played by King Hussein's in fostering peace, stability and security in the Middle East.

He said the King's important role was clear during Wye River Plantation talks in October, when a deal was brokered between the Palestinians and Israel unlocking the stalled peace process.

But Israel's refusal to release Palestinian political prisoners, which sparked violent street protests in

the occupied territories, put the agreed upon second troop redeployment from the West Bank on deep freeze.

Specter, who is touring the region and the Gulf, also voiced appreciation for Jordan's support for peaceful conflict resolution.

He also commended the advanced level of democracy, the great margin of freedom and the country's economic policies which have resulted in high levels of development in the Kingdom.

Jordan deports illegal workers

By Mohammad Ben Hussein

AMMAN — Scores of illegal foreign workers are being deported almost daily as the government continues to crackdown on foreign labourers in the Kingdom, a police official said Sunday.

The Public Security Department did not disclose the number of workers that have been deported or their nationalities, but the official said organising the labour force in the Kingdom was an ongoing and "serious" campaign.

Responding to charges by businesspersons and economists that the government's efforts to streamline the illegal foreign labour force had lost steam, Ministry of Labour Secretary-General Saleh Tarawneh told the Jordan Times that the ministry was proceeding aggressively with its campaign to organise the politically-sensitive labour market and crack down on illegal foreign labour.

Tarawneh said so far an estimated 119,000 foreign workers have rectified their status and the ministry was legalising the status of workers in the fields permitted under the Labour Law.

Successive governments have been reluctant to crack down on illegal workers and implement the Labour Law, which allows foreign workers in only four key sectors — agriculture, construction, domestic and sanitation — for fear of offending Arab countries.

"The Public Security Department in conjunction with the Labour Ministry launched a nationwide campaign against illegal foreign labourers working as gas station attendants, mechanics, guards and messengers," the police official told the Jordan Times.

He said the campaign's main aim was to encourage foreign workers to rectify their legal status rather than deporting them to their countries.

Interior Minister Nayef Qadi had estimated that Jordan may be hosting up to one million foreign workers, with the vast majority residing illegally. According to government officials, Egyptian nationals made up almost half the number of workers without permits.

In October, Egypt agreed that it will not allow Egyptian workers to enter Jordan without a contract authenticated by Jordanian and Egyptian officials.

The agreement between Jordan and Egypt also placed more stringent conditions on any Egyptian wishing to visit a relative in the Kingdom.

"Foreigners are flocking to the (Labour) ministry's offices to legalise their residency in the country, an average of 500 people a day," said Bahjat Kuteishat, head of the Labour Ministry's Employment Department. He said that Egyptians top the list of those who have rectified their status followed by Syrian nationals.

According to the Labour Law, if employers fail to legalise their workers' status, the employer could be fined up to JD100 and the labourer will be deported at the employer's expense.

Unemployment in Jordan is officially estimated at around 16 per cent and unofficially around 27 per cent.

Government restructures electricity sector, splits firm

AMMAN (J.T.) — The government's drive to restructure the energy sector took a step forward with an announcement that three separate new companies for power distribution, generation and transmission will begin operation on Jan. 1, 1999.

Minister of Water and Energy Hani Mulki Sunday said the committee in charge of privatising the electricity sector has completed required measures necessary for the restructuring of the sector and registered the entities with the companies controller at the Ministry of Industry and Trade.

Mulki was quoted by the Jordan News Agency, Petra, as saying that "the new companies will begin operating independently as of Jan. 1, 1999."

He added that the government will conduct financial studies on distribution and generation to allow private sector participation in the two companies, while

transmission will remain in the government's hands.

According to the minister, amendments to the 1996 Electricity Law, in line with the government policy to restructure the sector, are currently under way and expected to be issued next month.

The proposed law includes provisions for the establishment of an electricity regulatory body to determine the cost and sale of electricity, he added.

Last month, eight international firms attended a pre-bid conference to build the first private independent power plant in Jordan to meet a rise in the country's electricity consumption between the years 2002 and 2006.

The government is looking for companies to build a 300-450 megawatt power plant, in Samra near Zarqa, on a build, own and operate basis at an estimated cost of \$300-400 million depending on the size of the plant. Bidding will close on Jan.

23, 1999.

The current generation capacity of the National Electricity Power Company is 971MW. With the expansion of the Aqaba thermal power station, due to be completed next year, power generation will increase to 1,361MW.

Jordan can also tap into electricity through the regional power grid. The first phase of a five-nation regional power grid linking Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Syria and Turkey was inaugurated this month with the Cairo-Amman line.

However, Jordan needs an additional 100MW annually beginning the year 2002.

Companies will be asked to submit two bids, one for a combined cycle plant based on diesel or gas depending on availability, and the other for a steam cycle plant, which will use heavy fuel oil — a less environment friendly option because of the high sulphur content.

Jordan unionists plan pro-Iraq Arab meeting

By Mohammad Ben Hussein

AMMAN — The 100,000-strong professional associations said Sunday they were planning to call for a meeting of their colleagues across the Arab World to encourage their governments to bust United Nations economic sanctions on Iraq after recent U.S.-British air strikes.

The four-day strikes that ended on Dec. 19 sparked demonstrations throughout the Arab World in support of Iraq, but until now, all Arab governments have adhered to trade sanctions imposed on Baghdad after its 1990 invasion of Kuwait.

"Arab people must do something to save the Iraqi people from their current plight," Hassan Jaber, chairman of the Jordan Professional Associations' 14-

member Executive Council, said.

"Arab countries are contributing to these deadly sanctions and they have to stop participating in this crime that is being committed against their Arab brethren," he told the Jordan Times.

The unions hope the proposed meeting would be held either in Amman or in Cairo. However, no date has yet been set.

Organisers said the idea of holding such a meeting to reflect Arab popular anger over the "U.S.-British aggression on Iraq" was raised during a meeting of the associations' executive committee this week.

"Contacts are under-way with our Arab colleagues," said one unionist.

The associations, long a bed-rock of popular support for the Iraqi people, have launched a vocal media

campaign to enlist mass solidarity with Iraq over the recent air bombardment.

They are also collecting money, medicine and other in-kind donations from members, who include nurses, doctors, engineers, veterinarians, lawyers and pharmacists.

"Jordanians have reacted positively to our fund-raising campaign," Jaber added but he declined to give details on how much aid has been collected so far.

He said the associations would meet on Wednesday to decide how to send the aid to Iraq and how to ensure its fair distribution.

The associations last week called on members across the Kingdom to boycott all American and British-made products and medicines in protest at the strikes.

RSS, Japanese agency sign technical accords

AMMAN (Petra) — The Royal Scientific Society (RSS) and the Japanese International Cooperation Agency (JICA) Sunday signed two agreements for technical cooperation in information system engineering and maintenance of medical equipment.

Under the first agreement, they agreed to extend for three more years annual regional training courses on information systems offered by the RSS in cooperation with JICA.

In accordance with provisions of the agreement, the RSS Centre for Computer Technology, Training and Industrial Studies will continue to hold a four-month regional training workshop on information systems engineering. Taking part in the next training workshop, which will start in March 1999, will be representatives of 11 Arab countries.

The course aims to train participants on analysing, designing, programming, documenting and experimenting with

information systems and assessing their performance. The course will train participants on designing information networks and modern operation systems.

The Centre for Computer Technology, Training and Industrial Studies has been holding such workshops, in cooperation with JICA since 1993. A total of 77 participants from 11 Arab countries have so far participated in these workshops.

The second agreement provides training for Palestinian engineers in medical equipment maintenance. The five-year agreement, which will take effect Jan. 1, 1999, authorises the RSS Electronic Services and Training Centre to conduct training courses on maintenance of medical equipment for technical cadres from the Palestinian National Authority's health ministry. The duration of each course will be two months.

Municipality to build pedestrian bridge over dangerous road

By Munther Murjan

AMMAN — The Greater Amman Municipality said on Sunday construction of a vital pedestrian steel bridge across a dangerous road in Amman would start soon to cut down on traffic-related accidents.

Amman Mayor Nidal Hadid promised to build the pedestrian bridge after hundreds of students staged a strike at the University Community College in Tabarbour to demand improved pedestrian safety following the death of their 20-year-old female colleague who was hit by a speeding car.

Demonstrators, who blocked traffic on the main highway, told Hadid that hundreds of people had been injured in

daily car accidents in front of the gates of their institute over the past few years.

The protesters agreed to disperse peacefully only after Hadid promised to build a steel bridge in front of the college's main gate.

"These bridges are usually constructed within 21 days at a cost of between JD20,000 and JD30,000," Hadid told the Jordan Times.

He said the bridge would be ready by Jan. 10, 1999.

Hadid said the municipality was working closely with the Traffic Department to build more pedestrian bridges over dangerous roads and intersections and to educate pedestrians over road safety.

Ahmad Jasser, vice-presi-

dent of the University Community College said the idea of building the overfly pedestrian bridge came after a meeting with Hadid following the recent tragic death.

They had been pressing for months to build an underground tunnel for pedestrians.

He said the college had for years been warning students of the dangers of crossing this street.

"But the latest accident has made them more careful when crossing the street," he told the Jordan Times.

The college also changed the original location of its main gate to a side street where traffic was less congested.

"We have instructed bus drivers to use that area to pick up

the students to help reduce traffic risks," Jasser said.

As a temporary solution, police have agreed to place some traffic officers near the area until the bridge was completed.

Nine citizens died and 268 others suffered injuries from traffic accidents within the third week of December, according to recent traffic department statistics.

Pedestrians, who were hit by speeding cars, formed 99 of the total 796 recorded accidents during that period.

Other accidents were caused by drivers disregarding traffic signs and neglecting to give right of passage to pedestrians.

University to offer studies on women affairs

By Susan Resheq

AMMAN — State-run University of Jordan said Sunday it will start offering postgraduate degrees in women studies next semester — the first such specialisation to be taught across the country.

Louis Mqatash, Dean of Post Graduate Studies at the university, said graduates holding master degrees in women studies would be able to tackle female issues in "a realistic and scientific way" and help the state prepare development programmes to improve the lot of women, who constitute only 14 per cent of the workforce despite their high level of education.

The new postgraduate specialisation could help reduce unemployment, especially among those holding undergraduate degrees in sociology,

political sciences, law, literature and public health studies.

"Women play a great social and economic role in our community and eventually, there should be specialists in fields relating to women," Mqatash told the Jordan Times.

Harb Hneily, deputy dean of postgraduate studies at the university, said students wishing to pursue higher studies in women affairs had to complete 34 credit hours, including their dissertation.

Programme Supervisor Amal Daghestani said Jordan is viewed as one of the main countries in the region that have invested on education for women as manifested by the high literacy rates.

"This programme will create specialised cadres responsible for formulating strategies for women's affairs," she said.

British historian working on book on Nabataeans

By Hind-Lara Mango

AMMAN — When British historian Jane Taylor first visited Jordan 20 years ago little did the writer/photographer know that her love affair with history would lead her to settle in the Kingdom.

Fascinated with the natural beauty of the country, Taylor has produced two books on Jordan and is now writing her third, on the Nabataeans, who ruled parts of the region and controlled its trade from Petra, capital of their Kingdom over 2,000 years ago.

Her first book, "High Above Jordan" included a collection of breath-taking aerial depiction of Jordan's varied topography and rich archaeological and historic sites and her second, "Petra," focused exclusively on the Nabataean-built red-rope city famed worldwide for its ornate sandstone temples and tombs.

"Once you start taking photographs of a place like this, two weeks are not enough," Taylor told the Jordan Times in a recent interview.

With a set of professional cameras hanging from her neck, ear muffs and a scarf to cover her white tresses, she has explored all parts of the Kingdom in the last ten years, often taking shots from Royal Air Force helicopters.

She says her second book, which captured the beauty of Petra and its incredible colour variations, manifested into "a special sort of bond" between herself, Petra and its ancient history.

It also inspired her to work on her third book, choosing the theme of the Nabataeans.

"The current book will not be



as oriented on pictures as the two previous books, but will offer a balance between text and pictures," noted Taylor.

Originally having studied and taught history in England before working as a documentary researcher for the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), Taylor says she sees herself primarily as a writer.

"This time I am concentrating on a historic narrative of the Nabataeans... it is a mixture of modern research of archaeologists and of ancient references."

Taylor's detailed work reflects the warm bond she has fostered over years of living in Jordan, building a network of friends that stretch from intellectuals to Bedouin — the current inhabitants of Petra.

"They have become very dear friends, and whenever I feel I need a break from writ-

ing, I go down to Petra and stay with the Bedouins at their bedouin village (just outside the city of Petra)," she said with a widening smile.

"It's an extraordinary experience becoming part of the bedouin world," she explained. Background material for her current book on the Nabataeans came from many tours she has been given by the elders of the Bedouin tribe.

"It is through these people that I have physically gotten to know places associated with the Nabataeans. For instance, they have taken me to Wadi Araba where we have traced Nabataean stopping points in the lower levels of Wadi Musa," she explains.

Her books have been sold in Jordan and abroad, helping boost Jordan's \$900 million a year tourism industry.

What's going on

FILM

"Ons ne vieillirons pas ensemble" at the French Cultural Centre at 6:30 p.m. and 8:30 p.m.

OLD PERFORMANCE

Performance at the Royal Cultural Centre at 8:00 (Dec. 29-31).

EXHIBITIONS

Exhibition of ceramics, sculpture, and abstract (plaster) by Jordanian, Iraqi, Syrian, Lebanese, and artists at Hammourabi Art Gallery, Gardens Street (Tel. 5536098), until Jan. 25.

Exhibition of Nabataean silver jewelry at the Jordan Trade Centre, off Wadi Sagra Street, until (Tel. 5699141/2).

"Winter" — works by several artists at Art Gallery, Um Uthaina (Tel. 5526932), until Jan. 28.

Anniversary Exhibition of Contemporary Artists at Darat Al Funun, Jabal Weibdeh (Tel. 5526932), until Jan. 28.

Myanmar dismisses Suu Kyi deportation rumours

YANGON (R) — Myanmar's military government Sunday dismissed rumours that it might deport opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi, saying they represented attempts by her party to create news headlines.

A Myanmar government statement said Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy (NLD) should join the ruling military and other countries in finding ways of riding out the Asian economic crisis, rather than trying to seek publicity.

"We hope the NLD will contribute in a positive and meaningful way to achieve a better, fuller life... and take a more responsible, constructive cooperation rather than resorting to whimsical and symbolic gestures designed merely to attract attention and create seasonal sensational headlines," it said.

A NLD statement obtained by Reuters Friday quoted Suu Kyi as saying that she had no intention of

leaving Myanmar amid rumours in Yangon that she might be expelled from the country and the NLD dissolved after New Year.

The Nobel peace laureate said the government would have problems finding a country to accept her as she held only Myanmar's citizenship.

Myanmar's official media have in recent months questioned whether Suu Kyi is still entitled to Myanmar nationality, on the grounds that she had married a British man, academic Michael Aris.

Semi-government organisations have in the past two months organised anti-NLD rallies in which they called for Suu Kyi's deportation and dissolution of her party. State-owned media have also made similar demands since mid-September when the NLD launched its Committee Representing People's Parliament (CRPP).

The government statement Sunday said it was not an appropriate time for Suu

Kyi and the NLD to engage in sensational politics while most Asian countries still struggle to recover from the economic turmoil.

"The Government of Myanmar is working hard to develop Myanmar and guide it through the current regional economic crisis. Much work remains ahead of us. The regional economic crisis is not improving and this is no time for playing politics," it said.

The NLD statement quoted Suu Kyi as saying this week that the ruling government, called the State Peace and Development Council (SPDC), would probably need to bribe a foreign totalitarian state with Myanmar's commodities in order to induce it to accept her.

"The only way for the ruling government to deport me is to make a give-and-take with a totalitarian state, by giving them a certain number of tonnes of rice or so... they don't have a rocket to send me to the moon either," she said.

U.S. lawmaker says Washington downplaying China threat in South China Sea

MANILA (AFP) — A senior U.S. congressman who has inspected a disputed chain of islands in the South China Sea has accused Washington of playing down China's aggression in the area, documents obtained Sunday said.

In his report to the chairman of the U.S. House Internal Relations Committee, Dana Rorabacher said the Chinese navy has been engaged in a "de facto encirclement of Spratly islands" by constructing military posts such as those discovered in a Philippine-claimed reef in November.

This "aggression" by the Chinese government "threatens trade and military sea-lanes vital to the United States and our allies," the U.S. legislator said.

"For two years, the State Department and the

Pentagon have pursued an 'ostrich policy' of burying their heads in the sand downplaying these dangerous developments," Rorabacher said in his report, a copy of which was obtained by reporters here.

Rorabacher had promised the Philippine government support in its dispute with China over the islands after he was flown over the area by Philippine officials two weeks ago.

He also accused China of "bullying" the Philippines by expanding military-type structures on Mischief Reef and stationing three naval vessels in the area.

The reef is part of the Spratly chain of islands that straddle vital shipping lanes in the South China Sea and are believed to lie atop vast oil and mineral deposits.

The islands are claimed in whole or part by China,

the Philippines, Malaysia, Brunei, Vietnam and Taiwan.

The U.S. government had "steadfastly opposed our fact-finding efforts for fear of upsetting the Communist Chinese," Rorabacher alleged.

He also warned of "greater conflicts" should Washington continue with its silence about the alleged "Chinese military build-up in the Spratlys."

A diplomatic row erupted between Manila and Beijing after the discovery of the expanded structures in November, which the Chinese government maintained were only fishing shelters.

President Joseph Estrada and his Chinese counterpart Jiang Zemin later agreed to resolve the dispute through peaceful means and for both governments to jointly use the structures pending a resolution of the sovereignty issue.



A young man clammers on a fallen tree in Newcastle-Upon-Tyne, after high winds on Boxing Day caused structural damage, particularly in the north of the country. A man was killed, two were missing and 80,000 people were left without electricity after the heavy storms lashed Britain and Ireland, police said (AFP photo)

One dead, 2 missing as storms lash Britain, Ireland

LONDON (AFP) — A man was killed, two were missing and 80,000 people were left without electricity after storms lashed Britain and Ireland Saturday, police said.

A 23-year-old man died when a tree fell on his car in the Connemara region of western Ireland. His girlfriend who was also in the car escaped unhurt.

In Britain, where winds reached 160 kilometres per hour, a 28-year-old man was carried away by a 10 metre wave as he was about to swim in the sea at Brighton.

Rescuers spotted him in the waves but the rough

seas prevented any efforts to save him, a police spokesman said.

Searches resumed Sunday after being called off Saturday night.

The man's partner and their son, who were also on the beach, managed to return to land and were treated in hospital.

The bad weather also caused the cancellation of ferry services between Britain and Ireland.

In the southwestern English county of Devon a 44-year-old man was missing after falling into a river. Helicopter searches were continuing for the man.

The Environment Agency issued 50 flood warnings in that region after torrential rain fell throughout Saturday.

A 4,300-tonne Portuguese ship was towed to safety near the Isle of Wight in southern England, after the ship was washed towards rocks.

In Northern Ireland, a number of people needed treatment for minor injuries after the wind tore the roof off an apartment block.

The winds were expected to die down Sunday, but heavy rain is expected which forecasters said could worsen flooding.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Pope shares holiday wishes with pilgrims at Castel Gandolfo

CASTEL GANDOLFO, Italy (AP) — Holding up well despite a demanding holiday schedule, a smiling Pope John Paul II lingered on the balcony of his vacation retreat Sunday to listen to the Christmas hymns and greetings of pilgrims gathered below. "Long live the Pope," one man chanted in the courtyard of his palace at Castel Gandolfo — a wish picked up and applauded by others in the crowd. John Paul, 78, delivered his weekly Sunday address from the balcony, cloaked in a red cape against the chill. Earlier in the month, a flu and fever had forced him to cancel some events. His voice stayed strong Sunday throughout what was only the latest in days of long public appearances, including a midnight Mass Christmas Eve that had kept him up until the early hours of the morning. Saturday, he came to his vacation retreat outside Rome for a few days of rest. Urging Catholics Sunday to think of both their families and the homeless throughout the remainder of the holidays, he became animated only after he finished his scripted remarks — when the faithful burst into applause. He smiled, leaned forward and nodded, staying outside for a few minutes while the crowd of Catholics from around the world clapped, cheered and sang. Wishing them a good rest of the holiday, and a happy last Sunday of the year, he finally disappeared back inside.

Russia puts newest nuclear missile generation online

MOSCOW (AP) — The military put 10 new Topol-M nuclear missiles on full combat readiness Sunday, the first time the missile has been deployed. The missile was developed to sustain Russia as a global nuclear power. The single-warhead Topol-M's were commissioned in the Saratov region, about 700 kilometres southeast of Moscow, the ITAR-TASS news agency reported. The deployment was a major step for Russia's cash-strapped military. The government doesn't have enough money to maintain all its armed forces, and decided to concentrate defence spending on developing the Topol-M. "This is a very important event, because even in the difficult financial conditions of 1998 we have managed to find funds for financing this top priority area," said Defence Minister Igor Sergeev, according to ITAR-TASS. The intercontinental Topol-M will be the new heart of Russia's missile forces. Forty are expected to be built by the end of 2000, taking the place of heavier, multiple-warhead missiles. The Topol-M is a lightweight, rugged missile designed to be fired from a vehicle. Its mobility increases its safety from preemptive enemy first strikes, unlike silo-based warheads.

1 killed, 2 injured in building collapse

PISA, Italy (AFP) — A 76-year-old woman was fatally injured and two people were hurt when a three-storey block of flats partly collapsed overnight at Pontedera, near Pisa, in northwest Italy, police said Sunday. A whole wing of the building caved in, probably because of a gas explosion, they said. Rescuers pulled the woman out alive, but she died in hospital. Two young people were slightly hurt. No other residents of the block of six flats were injured. Less than two weeks earlier, on Dec. 16, 27 people were killed when a residential block collapsed in Rome.

Weather could help bamboo raft reach Darwin

BRISBANE, Australia (AP) — Favourable weather could help a 16-metre bamboo raft — retracing what organisers say was man's first ocean voyage 100,000 years ago — reach Darwin in northern Australia by Dec. 31. The raft, Nale Tasih, is the project of Australian maritime historian Bob Hobman, who is reenacting the arrival of the ancestors of Australian aborigines from Kupang on the Indonesian island of Timor. Early Sunday, the Nale Tasih was 160 nautical miles from its destination after setting out on Dec. 17, and crossing into Australian waters on Dec. 26. Hobman said forecasts of freshening winds linked to a strengthening monsoonal trough across northern Australia could push the raft to the mainland by Thursday. On board with Hobman is a crew of four, including Melbourne-based scientist Robert Bednarik, Australian documentary film maker Peter Rogers, and two Indonesian crew members. Food supplies are being supplemented by fresh fish speared by the Indonesian sailors. Hobman said the raft's first attempt to cross the Timor Sea earlier this year was thwarted by the El Niño phenomenon which held back the annual monsoons in the region.

Paris' Arc de Triomphe shut down by strike

PARIS (R) — The Arc de Triomphe, one of Paris' most popular tourist attractions, was off-limits to visitors Sunday as the monument's employees went on strike over staffing levels and pay. Built on the orders of the Emperor Napoleon between 1806 and 1835 to honour the French army, the arc draws about a million visitors a year and offers a panoramic view of the French capital. The employees, who walked out Saturday afternoon, have demanded negotiations with the culture ministry before they will consider returning to work. They complain they must work too much overtime and are demanding bonuses and the hiring of additional staff. A ministry spokesman said talks were expected to begin Monday between the arc's approximately 50 employees and the Caisse Nationale des Monuments Historiques, the state agency that manages France's historic monuments. The last two months have been particularly tough on Paris tourists, who have been barred for a few days at a time from the Eiffel Tower and the Louvre, Orsay and Grand Palais art museums due to wildcat strikes.

Two Peruvian cholera victims hospitalised in Chile

ARICA, Chile (AFP) — Two Peruvian cholera victims were hospitalised in the Chilean port city of Arica, local health authorities said Saturday. They were the first known cases of cholera in Chile in the last four years. The patients are merchants who make frequent trips between their country and Arica, a city bordering on Peru and 1,650 kilometres north of Santiago. They were hospitalised Thursday. Doctors said their lives were not in danger. Cholera is an acute bacterial infection involving the small intestine. It is marked by diarrhoea and vomiting. The region's health service ordered stricter inspection of water discharges and the local water supply to detect the presence of cholera organisms. The health service also urged people to thoroughly cook seafood, and vegetables that grow close to the ground. Chile controlled an outbreak of the disease between 1991 and 1994, when the disease spread from neighbouring Peru and affected about 150 persons, three of whom died.

Police investigating suicides after poison ordered on Internet

TOKYO (AP) — A man who reportedly ran a "suicide clinic" on the Internet is suspected of providing cyanide to seven customers, including at least one woman who killed herself with the poison, police said Sunday.

The man reportedly called himself "Dr. Kiriko" — a Japanese comic book character who practices euthanasia — and killed himself earlier this month. A second of his customers also killed herself, but with sleeping pills.

A police spokesman in Tokyo who gave only his surname, Fujii, said Sunday that the seven people who ordered cyanide transferred money to the bank account of the man.

His body was discovered at his home in the city of Sapporo on Japan's northernmost main island of Hokkaido on Dec. 15.

Quoting unidentified police sources, Kyodo News agency said he was a 27-year-old pharmacist with a history of mental illness. Media reports said he commit-

ted suicide.

The cyanide suicides are the latest in a year of bizarre poisoning cases that have troubled Japan, which once prided itself on relative freedom from indiscriminate crime.

"At the close of a dark year yet another poisoning incident symbolic of it has occurred," lamented the Yomiuri newspaper, Japan's largest, in a Sunday editorial.

Fujii said police are investigating the suicides of two of "Dr. Kiriko's" customers, a 21-year-old Tokyo woman who died from an apparent overdose of sleeping pills and another person who died after taking cyanide.

The Asahi newspaper reported the woman who used cyanide was a 24-year-old Tokyo resident and committed suicide on Dec. 15.

Yomiuri reported Sunday that another Tokyo woman has confessed to acting as an intermediary between the suicide victim and the cyanide provider.

Fujii said three others

who made cash transfers have been confirmed alive, while two remain unaccounted for. Media reports, however, said four have been confirmed alive.

Kyodo reported that the man's Internet site was called "Dr. Kiriko's consultation room," featured information on suicide by poisoning and offered advice via e-mail for those who wanted to kill themselves.

The suicides were the latest in a string of poison deaths this year in Japan.

In July, four people died and 63 became ill after eating curry rice laced with arsenic at a summer festival in southwestern Japan. A former insurance saleswoman was arrested earlier this month on murder and attempted murder charges in those deaths.

The poisoning set off a spate of copycat crimes with drinks at stores and in vending machines, including a man who died after drinking a can of tainted tea.

Fighting in Angola blocks searches for crashed U.N. plane

LUANDA (AFP) — Battles between Angolan government troops and UNITA rebels hampered a search for the wreckage of a U.N. plane which crashed in the centre of the war-torn African country, U.N. sources said Sunday.

The U.N. Observer Mission in Angola (MONUA) said the Hercules C-130 plane was carrying 10 passengers and four crew when it went down east of Vila Nova, 45 kilometres from Huambo.

Huambo, capital of the east-central province of the same name, is one of several areas where rebels of the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA) are fighting government troops.

A MONUA statement said the plane burst into flames and crashed at about midday (1100 GMT) after taking off from Huambo for the northeastern city of Saurimo, without giving details of those who were aboard.

The United Nations has appealed to the government and UNITA for help in access to the

crash site and for assistance in rescuing any survivors, but it was not known whether they included U.N. observers who have been trying to implement peace protocols signed in Lusaka in 1994.

MONUA officials were not available for comment early Sunday.

Angola plunged back into serious conflict this year, as hardliners in UNITA loyal to the movement's veteran leader Jonas Savimbi have refused to disarm and demobilise in line with the Lusaka protocols and President Jose Eduardo dos Santos has decided to crush the armed guerrillas by force.

In the past month, heavy fighting causing hundreds of casualties has broken out in the chief town of Bie province east of Huambo, Kuito. Kuito was already devastated in ferocious battles that broke out anew after UNITA lost general elections to Dos Santos's People's Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA) late in 1992.

Sunday, an independent

Roman Catholic radio station, Ecclesia, said that some 200 people had been killed since UNITA forces began an offensive on Kuito on Dec. 9, adding that 463 people needed hospital treatment after heavy bombardments which ended Saturday night.

Thirty-five people died Friday in Kuito, one family losing eight members in the shelling, and 63 people were wounded.

The Angolan army struck back against the rebels Saturday, forcing UNITA artillery units to withdraw from the hills around Kuito, Ecclesia reported.

The residents of the ruined town left shelters Sunday where they had spent Christmas and many went to mass.

UNITA and the formerly Marxist MPLA have been struggling for power since independence from Portugal in 1975, and successive attempts by the United Nations and mediating countries to end the conflict have foundered.

The Luanda government estimates that Savimbi still has some 35,000 men in arms.



A group of pro-democracy activists, holding portraits Chinese dissidents, protest outside Xinhua News Agency in Hong Kong. The group of about 30 Hong Kong marchers presented the news agency with a petition demanding the release of mainland dissidents — Wang Youcai, Qin Yongmin and Xu Wenli (Reuters photo)

Hong Kong protesters slam the arrest of Chinese dissidents

HONG KONG (AFP) — Around 35 activists staged a sit-in outside the local branch of China's official Xinhua news agency Sunday in protest at a continuing crackdown on political dissent by Beijing.

China has been clamping down heavily on dissidents and handing out lengthy prison sentences for subversion and endangering state security.

This is the worst white terror China has seen since June 4," Szeto Wah of the Hong Kong Alliance in Support of Patriotic Democratic Movements of China told reporters.

The Alliance published a statement calling for the immediate release of the three-jailed activists, and

published a list of 11 political activists detained or sentenced recently in China.

Authorities in the southern province of Hangzhou Sunday sentenced labour activist Zhang Shuangui to a 10-year term for "endangering state security" after he gave an interview on peasant unrest to U.S.-based Radio Free Asia.

The sentencing came less than a week after three prominent activists connected to the nascent opposition China Democracy Party (CDP) were given heavy sentences for subversion.

CDP founder Wang Youcai got an 11-year sentence for trying to subvert

the state, while Wuhan-based Qin Yongmin was jailed for 12 years and Beijing-based Xu Wenli for 13 years on similar charges.

Holding placards and pictures of the dissidents and chanting for their release, the protesters marched from a department store in downtown Hong Kong to Xinhua's offices in Happy Valley, where they planned to sit quietly in protest for 24 hours.

With no Xinhua representatives present to receive their petition, the protesters fixed the petition and pictures of the dissidents to the news agency's front door.

The petition called for the Chinese government to abide by the International

Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. China is a signatory to both accords, but has yet to ratify either.

The petition also called the immediate release of political dissidents and for the right to form political parties in China.

The protest was also in support of a hunger strike begun Thursday by 214 dissidents across China.

The relay-style hunger strike is expected to last 100 days in protest at the sentencing of Wang, Qin and Xu. The protest was jointly organised by a number of human rights and activist organisations, including the Alliance.

China jails 4th dissident in yearend sweep

BEIJING (R) — China convicted its fourth dissident in a week Sunday, jailing a veteran labour activist for 10 years for passing information on rural unrest to U.S.-backed Radio Free Asia, a human rights group said.

The court in central Hunan province also stripped Zhang Shuangui of his political rights for five years for telling a Radio Free Asia interviewer about farmers' protests, according to the New York-based Human Rights in China.

The Huaihua Intermediate Court took 30 minutes after a trial lasting two hours and 20 minutes to sentence Zhang, who was escorted to the court building by a convoy of 20 police vehicles, the group said.

The sentencing of Zhang follows the jailings of three founders of a banned opposition party and the issue of an anti-subversion decree in line with an order by President Jiang Zemin that all threats to stability be "resolutely nipped in the bud."

Zhang's case "clearly shows that the second wave of repression of democracy activists will soon get under way," the Hong Kong-based Information Centre of Human

Rights and Democratic Movement in China said in a statement.

The Huaihua court did not answer reporters' telephone calls.

Friday, court officials confirmed that Zhang would undergo a closed-door trial Sunday, working overtime on a day when public offices are normally closed.

According to Human Rights in China, Zhang was accused of "illegally providing intelligence to overseas enemy organisations and people."

In an interview with Radio Free Asia in March, Zhang spoke of a demonstration in Hunan's Xupu county by about 80 farmers against excessive taxes and another protest which resulted in deadly violence, the rights group said.

China views the U.S. government-funded Radio Free Asia as hostile to Communist rule and blocks its broadcasts.

In June, Beijing refused to grant visas to Radio Free Asia reporters to cover President Bill Clinton's visit. Beijing has also lobbied other countries not to let the network set up transmission stations on their territory.

Zhang, who served seven years in prison for a prior con-

viction based on his role in pro-democracy demonstrations in 1989, is the fourth opposition figure to receive a lengthy sentence in the year-end crackdown on dissent.

Veteran activist Xu Wenli was sentenced to 13 years in prison on Dec. 21 on subversion charges for trying to set up the Chinese Democratic Party to challenge Communist rule. Party activist Wang Youcai received an 11-year term on the same day.

The following day, Qin Yongmin received 12 years in jail for his role in forming the pro-democracy party.

Zhang, 45, had been in police custody since he was detained on July 21 after he tried to set up a pressure group to help laid-off workers, the rights group said.

The treatment of Zhang shows that "in addition to suppressing Chinese Democratic Party members, the Communist Party will show absolutely no leniency to dissidents involved with unemployed workers," the Hong Kong-based centre said.

In Hong Kong, democracy activists marched to China's official Xinhua News Agency office Sunday and presented a petition demanding the release of the three jailed dis-

sidents.

"We are demonstrating (to make) the Chinese government... release Wang Youcai, Qin Yongmin and Xu Wenli," Mak Hoi-Wah, vice-chairman of the Hong Kong Alliance in Support of Patriotic Democratic Movements of China, told Reuters Television.

The stiff sentences come amid a nationwide campaign to crush dissent and subversion that has targeted activists, publications and the entertainment industry.

President Jiang warned in two tough speeches recently that subversive activities would not be tolerated and said China would never accept Western-style democracy.

Shortly after the warning, China targeted the arts and entertainment industries, mandating harsh punishments for those found guilty of "inciting to subvert state power."

The new rules cover writing, music, movies, television, video recordings and computer software, outlawing material that "endangers social order" — the catch-all phrase for words or deeds that challenge the Communist Party's monopoly on power.

Republicans rap Gore effort on impeachment

WASHINGTON (UPI) — The Republican Party is knocking Al Gore's intention to influence the impeachment trial in the U.S. Senate, saying there is "no controlling legal authority" for the vice president to intercede.

Gore told the Los Angeles Times, in an interview published Sunday, he hoped to cast tie-breaking votes and consult with senators during the trial next month that will decide whether President Clinton is to be removed from office.

Gore, whose only constitutional duty is to preside over the Senate, figures he may be called on to break a tie vote, for instance, or to vote on procedural matters such as the admissibility of evidence.

The vice president, wary of admonitions to the White House by Sen. Robert Byrd, D-W.Va., not to "tamper with this jury," told the Times that he does not intend to "button-hole" his former colleagues, because "that would not be appropriate."

In a release late Saturday, Republican Party Chairman Jim Nicholson said: "There's only one way for the vice president to 'consult in a situation like this,' and that's to take no part in the proceedings at all. He's fiercely partisan. He's the vice president. And he has a clear conflict of interest."

Nicholson continued: "To use Al Gore's own words, there's 'no controlling legal authority' for him to play the 'thirteenth juror' in Bill Clinton's trial in the Senate.

and he's got no business button-holing the senators."

The Senate is to sit as a jury, with Chief Justice William Rehnquist presiding, at Clinton's trial. The procedure was called for after the House of Representatives passed two articles of impeachment, citing Clinton with perjury and obstruction of justice. If 67 senators vote to convict on either count, Clinton would immediately be removed from office and Gore sworn in as president.

Sri Lanka turns down British offer to end bloodshed

COLOMBO (AFP) — Sri Lanka has rejected an offer by a British legislator to mediate a settlement to the drawn out Tamil separatist war that has claimed over 55,000 lives, reports here said Sunday.

The British MP, Simon Hughes of the Liberal Democratic Party, has been told Colombo will not assist him if he goes ahead with his planned visit to Sri Lanka in the New Year, the Sunday Times weekly said.

It said Hughes had hoped to meet President Chandrika Kumaratunga, several senior ministers as well as leaders of the separatist Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) in the north of the island.

"The government has said that no ministers will meet the British MP and denied his request to go to the Wanni (to meet the LTTE)," the newspaper reported, adding: "It has made it clear that it will not accept mediation from any individual."

Neither government officials nor diplomats were available for comment on the mediation offer.

But last month a British minister said there was scope for third party mediation to the ethnic strife in this former British colony.

British Foreign Office Minister Derek Fatchett, who held talks with Kumaratunga and opposition leader Ranil Wickremesinghe, said he believed there could be mediation in Sri Lanka.

However, he noted there had been no invitation to Britain, Sri Lanka's former ruler until 1948, to act as go-between in peace talks.

A group of visiting British MPs said here a week earlier that Britain

was willing to offer its "good offices" to broker a settlement between Colombo and the LTTE, which maintains a secretariat in London.

The government made it clear this month it was not willing to accept conditional talks and has rejected "mediation," although it says "facilitation" by a third party is acceptable.

More than 55,000 people have been killed in Sri Lanka's drawn out conflict in the past 26 years.

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Pragmatists win the day

IN THE initial days of Iraq's occupation of Kuwait in the summer of 1990, the Iraqi president made his troop withdrawal from the oil-rich emirate contingent on Israel's withdrawal from the occupied Arab territories. In those days the linkage was very popular and reasonable to many in the Arab World. It even prompted Washington, eager to pacify its allies in the Gulf War, to launch the Madrid talks in 1991 that have so far led to the Oslo accords, the Wye River agreement and the Jordan-Israel peace treaty.

Today, as we come to the end of 1998, in the Arab mind this linkage is still relevant.

And today while the U.S. and Britain insist that the sanctions on Iraq will not be lifted before all of Baghdad's weapons of mass destruction are eliminated, the Arabs counter by demanding that all WMDs in the region be removed, an allusion to Israel's massive arsenal. The Arabs also remind the U.S. that while it is demanding that Iraq — as well as Libya and Sudan — adhere to U.N. resolutions, it is not demanding that Israel implement relevant Security Council resolutions or the agreements it signed, especially with the Palestinians, under the sponsorship of the U.S. itself.

No matter how justified and politically correct the Arab demands are, the U.S. and its strategic ally in the region, Israel, are not about to agree with Arab arguments because the U.S. is the sole superpower and Israel is the sole regional power and because the Arabs are divided and weak. In simple terms the vanquished cannot ask the conqueror to be fair and just. The victors set their own terms. And it is obvious what these terms are. The U.S. policy objectives in the region are to protect its interests (oil) and to ensure that Israel lives in peace with its neighbours. The "neighbours" by U.S. definition include all the Arab countries plus Muslim nations like Iran. All American actions in the past decades can only be explained through these declared policy objectives. And these are not about to be changed.

The Arabs, therefore, have three choices; either defy the U.S. or succumb to its dictates or resort to real politics. The first option seems not to be on the table, not because the U.S. can dictate whatever it wants to the Arabs, but for the simple reason that the latter are divided and there is no indication that their division will end soon. To succumb totally to the U.S. will only bring the wrath of the Arab people on their governments and divide the Arabs even more. Pragmatism seems at the moment to be the right policy to pursue.

Unfortunately, some Arab regimes do not seem to be able to play the game because they still live with the outdated mentality of the 1960s relying on rhetoric and threats and living in a make-believe world believing they can defeat their adversaries.

It has been recognised at the Arab and international level, especially among our friends in Europe and elsewhere, that the Iraqi leadership could have averted most of the injustice that befell Iraq had it played its cards right. Unfortunately, Iraq did not only alienate its allies in the West, but also its Arab brethren. While we agree that the new World Order is unjust and unfair, we think that such brutal order cannot be positively influenced by defiance. Great powers like China, France and Russia do not agree with the way the U.S. runs world affairs. They know very well that if they challenge it, they will lose. That is why they engage U.S. hegemony in a constructive manner. The least we should do is learn from them.

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

Al Ra'i's Fahed Fanek said one of the results of the recent U.S.-British aggression on Iraq is that it has weakened any Arab power that could potentially threaten Israel and challenge U.S. domination of oil in the region. According to such policies, the U.S. has every right to decide what its objectives are, and the way to achieve these aims, which include the destruction of the Iraqi people, and preventing Arabs from attaining the most simple rights in life, Fanek said. But, asked Fanek, is it necessary for Arab countries to implement the U.S.-imposed sanctions and be a partner in the humiliation and killing of an Arab Nation? In the past, the justification for adhering to these policies was that the Arabs had no choice but to obey United Nations sanctions and the will of the world community, said Fanek. But presently the situation is different, argued Fanek, as most members of the U.N. Security Council now stand against the embargo, leaving the U.S. and the U.K. stubbornly clinging to their positions. The decision to lift the sanctions on Iraq must be achieved by a unanimous Arab move, the writer said. Otherwise, Jordan cannot wait until the embargo slowly diminishes, stated Fanek.

Al Dustour's Mazen Saker said plans to hold an emergency Arab summit to discuss the Iraqi problem following the recent aggression on Iraq, did not materialise as such a meeting "needs sufficient preparations to make it a success." The writer said he did not believe the "preparations excuse" was the reason behind the delay, adding that the same problems in 1991 plaguing the holding of such a summit exist today. All Iraqis, however, are waiting for a summit, and an end to the embargo. If the U.S. and Great Britain use political and economic pressure to halt the convening of a summit, Arab regimes will be faced with a disaster, said Saker.

Economic Review

How prepared are the Arab economies for globalisation?

By Dr. Yusuf Mansur

MANY OF the Arab economies are facing liberalisation through reform programmes and/or trade agreements such as the association agreement with the EU and World Trade Organisation membership. The question that is often asked is how well can they compete and adjust to this new global environment? In other words, can economies that have traditionally been dependent on the sale of their natural resources for revenues; relying on restrictive trade policies of high tariffs, quotas, government subsidies to protect their industries; and amassed large public sectors characterised by low productivity and huge deficits, now benefit from liberalisation while still minimising the economic cost associated with this trend? The answer is yes and it lies in increased specialisation and not oil: oil has proven to be not too stable a resource on which to stake a country's development.

The fall in oil prices to around \$10 per barrel (the lowest price in twelve years) had a great impact not only on the region as a whole, but also on Jordan whose productive, trade and labour markets have been entan-

gled since the early seventies in the oil economies of the Gulf, such that its economy moves in tandem with the oil economies. The Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) is expected to lose \$30 billion this year if its production level remains around 14 million barrels per day and the price improves to \$13 per barrel, which is not likely. In the past, when the barrel was worth \$30, their incomes reached \$180 billion compared to \$70 billion today, which is \$30 billion in comparison to 1973 prices. In other words, the drop in annual income is equivalent to \$150 billion.

Furthermore, Saudi Arabia may suffer a \$13.1 billion (29.2 per cent) decline, revenues are expected to be \$31.4 billion instead of \$44.4 billion — as earlier expected — loss in revenues due to the shortfall in prices will increase the budget deficit three-fold to \$4.5 billion in 1998.

As early as 1975 economists recognised through the seminal work of Herbert Grubel and P.H. Lloyd that a high proportion of trade in industrial countries consisted of a mutual exchange among a group of similar goods,

which they labelled as intra-industry trade (IIT). This trade is comprised of exchange in similar but slightly differentiated products, the differentiation resulting from imperfect competition, or competition among close substitutes which are demanded by consumers in different countries with distinctly different tastes. (In the model of competitive advantage, sophisticated production and demand are prerequisites for enhanced competitiveness).

Recent investigations have demonstrated that the "more" developed economies have greater specialised trade structures than those of the "less" developed countries. Hence industrialised countries tend to have more trade in the same products as a proportion of their total trade than developing ones, which could be restated as: the more IIT the country possesses, the more likely an economy is to be competitive in the changing global environment. For countries that are embarking on globalisation or liberalisation, the level of IIT could be taken as a measure of their preparedness.

Arab countries do not compare

favourably with other regions in terms of IIT. Between 1992-94 the ratio of IIT in manufactures to total trade was 25 per cent for the region, up from 15.9 per cent between 1984-86, thus demonstrating a significant increase in IIT over a span of eight years. Furthermore, the highest scores of the Arab countries in IIT between 1992-94 were Oman (41.4 per cent), Tunisia (30.1 per cent), Jordan (24.8 per cent), and Morocco (20.4 per cent). However, Israel scored 58.4 per cent, industrial countries averaged 87.8 per cent, the EU 88.6 per cent, APEC a stunning 90.3 per cent, Mercosur 51.9 per cent and NAFTA 77.3 per cent.

Additionally, IIT of Arab countries with the cost of the world is relatively low (16.1 per cent) — compared to 38.4 per cent for Israel and 28.4 per cent for Turkey — and (21.1 per cent) for IIT among the Arab countries themselves, which indicates that specialisation is the way to go for increasing intra-Arab trade. This also means that cooperation among the Arab countries in trade is highly likely even though they produce similar and not complementary products —

among the reasons cited to that some economies are demonstrating enhanced sophistication and that the proximity of markets avails information more readily about products, which is not the case for distant countries; a very important ingredient in trade in sophisticated products.

So how prepared are the Arab economies for globalisation? Not as well as they should be and therefore efforts should be focused on increasing their competitiveness. The bad news is that the Arab region falls below the rest of the regional area blocks. The good news is that Jordan is among the highest scores in the region. Moreover, when evaluating trade between Jordan and trade blocks such as the EU, the gap between Jordan and the EU should be viewed as an opportunity for increasing competitiveness through more specialisation and IIT, which would also reduce the economic and social costs that may arise from globalisation. Let's not wait too long.

The Palestinians have done their part

By Pascal B. Karmy

THE WYE River accord signed in Washington on Oct. 23 by Palestinian President Yasser Arafat and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu contained a time schedule for the Israeli troop redeployment in three stages, in return for security concessions by the Palestinian National Authority (PNA).

The Wye River accord came into force on Nov. 3, after having been ratified by the Israeli government, and on Nov. 20 the army executed its first redeployment. Netanyahu's government then halted subsequent redeployments on grounds that the PNA have violated the Wye accord. The PNA denied the Israeli government's accusation, while the U.S. insisted that the two parties fulfil their obligations in accordance with the specified time frame outlined in

the accord.

The PNA, in fact, has fulfilled its obligations: it has abolished provisions of the Palestine Charter deemed to be offensive to Israel — although it had already done so in 1996 and earlier in 1998 — and it has issued a plan for combating terrorism, warned Palestinians against inciting violence, and it has started to confiscate unlicensed arms.

For its part, Israel has executed the first phase of redeployment, allowed the opening of the Gaza airport, and released 250 prisoners, 100 of them political prisoners and 150 common criminals.

The prisoner release, however, was a complete farce as the PNA never intended or required the release of common criminals — going against the spirit of the Wye River accord if not its letter.

Palestinian and Israeli committees have met to discuss the ques-

tion of the safe passage between the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, the opening of a Gaza seaport, and future redeployments, and three security committees were formed, comprising the PNA, Israel, and the U.S. to deal with cooperation on this matter.

As can be seen, the PNA has complied with all set provisions of the Wye River accord. It is now incumbent upon Netanyahu's government to comply with Wye River accord, especially with regard to the second phase of the redeployment. As usual, however, Netanyahu prevaricates and brings out new conditions and pretexts which have nothing to do with the Wye River accord.

One of the main conditions now set by Netanyahu for the next troop withdrawal is that Arafat halt his intent to declare an independent State of Palestine next May, when five-year Oslo interim

peace accord expires.

Netanyahu has no business in objecting to the proclamation of the Palestinian statehood. This was not one of the provisions of the Wye accord. The Palestinian people have an inherent right to self-determination and this right is embodied in their charter, particularly Article 1 Paragraph 2, and Article 55. Moreover, this right is recognised under international law and practice and has been specifically recognised in Resolution 637 A (VII) of Dec. 16 by the United Nations General Assembly which recommended that "the state-members of the U.N. shall uphold the principle of self-determination of all people and nations." Accordingly by virtue of this right the PNA can proclaim Palestinian statehood.

Even U.S. President Bill Clinton has, by implication, recognised the right of the Palestinians to self-

determination, when he stated in his speech delivered before the PNC on Dec. 14 that "the Palestinians have a chance to determine their own destiny on their own land."

The claim by Netanyahu and his foreign minister, Ariel Sharon, that Israel will annex the rest of the West Bank territory under its control, if Palestinian statehood is proclaimed in May, is both preposterous and illegal.

As an occupying power, Israel has no right whatsoever to do so under the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949.

All Netanyahu seems to be doing is making false accusations against the PNA to please the extremists within his coalition, and to divest himself of Israeli obligations under the Wye River accord.

LETTERS

Water agreement more favourable to Jordan than Israel

To the editor:

YOUR STORY, "Israel reaffirms its commitment to water agreement," published Tuesday, 15 December, is very revealing. General Rafael Eitan (Tsomet Party), Minister of Agriculture of Israel, discovered a bit late that the water agreement with Jordan is not favourable to him, and he intends to reopen negotiations over water. Another official position came from General Ariel Sharon (Likud), minister of foreign affairs, reaffirming Israel's commitment to that agreement, which, I take it, is inclusive of all the agreements and arrangements I worked out with him when he was minister of infrastructure, and have both our signatures on them.

I say your article is revealing because the Jordan Times, as well as the Arabic papers who pioneered and stepped up the fury over the so called "water pollution" and "water contamination" last summer, cited a statement by General Eitan as evidence of their false charges. The general was quoted as saying that water from Lake Tiberias is not fit for drinking, and the Jordan Times and the other papers echoed it with excitement as though it was a journalistic hit piece, not realising that he was undermining the Jordanian interests by his statement.

Is it clear to you now why Gen. Eitan is not happy about the water agreement with Jordan? I will tell you one reason now, and several other reasons later if a suitable context comes up. Jordan's success in getting a storage facility in Lake Tiberias under the agreement and subsequent arrangements with Gen. Sharon has been bothering many Israelis. Jordan succeeded where many other previous attempts with support from the U.S. in 1953 and 1955 failed. Israel did not want to share that reservoir with any other country.

Gen. Sharon was quoted as saying he would not let Syrians dip their feet in that Israeli lake. Jordan today,

gets some 60 mcm of water from it every year. This is one reason why Gen. Eitan is unhappy with the agreement. I would expect him to be further unhappy about arrangements worked out last March regarding the diversion wall across the Yarmouk at Adassiya, and incremental storage in the lake, at least for a while.

As to how much water Jordan now gets, your article erred again. In addition to the above 60 mcm, Jordan adjusted the summer sharing in the Yarmouk and increased its summer share by 13 mcm. Jordan was able to divert and store some 42 mcm of Yarmouk water in the Karameh Dam. Such an amount used to flow down to the Jordan River or be intercepted by Israeli pumps downstream. The total incremental water that Jordan gets under the agreement amounts to about 115 mcm, and not 60 mcm as your article erroneously reported. This amount will be increased after the implementation of the agreements I had worked out with Gen. Sharon last March, some of which are being implemented now.

One more error in your article: the peace agreement did not "guarantee an additional 215 mcm per year" for Jordan. Had you read the agreements carefully, the only specified figures are (10, 20, and 50 mcm). The rest of Jordan's share is the Yarmouk flow after deducting 25 mcm for Israel, and whatever the dam(s) on the Jordan River and side wadis would capture. No figures are specified because such figures would depend on the rainfall season.

Finally, your article could have been more revealing if it published the full statement made by the two right wing generals.

Munther J Haddadin, former minister of water and irrigation.

Non-political Arab-American literature exists!

To the editor:

ON THE 13th of December, under the title "Books and Culture," Ray Hanania wrote that Arab-American literature is lacking in telling the non-political story of Palestinians and Arabs. There are quite a few books on this, but they are difficult to find as most of them are not registered under the Arab-American literature category. It is only recently that Arab writers, as other ethnic groups, have started to use the term Arab-American. Instead each has used his/her own individual nationality. Who would think of Jibril Khalil

Jibril as an Arab-American writer?

I believe it was a group of female writers who started to present themselves in literature under the title Arab-American. Together they have written a book called "Food for our grandmothers." Some of these women include Lisa Majaji, Naomi Shihab Nye, and Diana Abu Jaber. Look out for their work, Mr. Hanania, and present them to your American friends.

Ulla Khreis
Irbid

Clinton victory in Iraq? It all depends on how you spell it

By Ray Hanania

IF THE MEASURE of victory is found in the achievement of one's goals, the U.S. bombing of Iraq is an utter failure. Unless, someone is lying about what those goals really are.

The bombing certainly has been beneficial to President Clinton, strengthening his popularity in domestic polls and possibly helping to shore up opposition to his impeachment. But Clinton's assertion that "Operation Desert Fox" achieved its stated goals is an exaggeration. It is typical of the kind of semantic gyrations that is bringing Clinton's presidency nearly to its knees.

Clinton claimed the decision to bomb Iraq was a direct result of Saddam Hussein's refusal to allow the UNSCOM team, led by Richard Butler, to enter an unspecified area for inspection. Many, including myself, suspect Butler choose this site knowing it would result in a confrontation with the Iraqi dictator. And that is one step short of an unavoidable conclusion that Butler's action was intended to give Clinton pretext to launch the unilateral attack on the eve of the House impeachment vote.

Only two of the four resolutions voted on by the House impeachment committee were adopted and then sent to the U.S. Senate for trial. Although we can only speculate on how the vote might have turned out without the bombing, it is certain Clinton's decision strengthened his popular

support.

The bombing of Iraq is now "paused." It can resume at any moment, despite Clinton's disingenuous proffer that he set the bombing date to avoid overlapping with Ramadan.

Is anyone surprised that despite Clinton's insistence of victory, the UNSCOM inspections have not resumed? Why should anyone believe him when he asserts that the attacks destroyed Iraq's ability to build weapons of mass destruction? If that is true, why is the United Nations embargo not lifted?

In fact, Saddam Hussein, who again surfaced unscathed, has declared that Butler's UNSCOM team will not be permitted to return to complete its inspections. Would anyone be surprised by a second bombing assault on Iraq during the U.S. Senate lengthy impeachment trial? Like the reasons Clinton has asserted as justification for the bombing raids, the reasons behind the U.N. embargo against Iraq are weak, too.

The bombing was exploited by Clinton to help influence domestic politics. On similar weak moral ground, the United Nations embargo is in place because Clinton and his allies lack a better alternative to deal with Saddam Hussein, a brutal dictator fashioned years ago with U.S. funding and military arms, and who today, refuses to go away.

The writer is a Palestinian-American author and journalist.

Aqaba

Editor's note: This is the article on the latest Aqaba: the second article in the Jordan Times

THIS YEAR has been a year of change for Aqaba. The Jordanian government has decided to build a new port in the city, and the U.S. has decided to build a new port in the city. The Jordanian government has decided to build a new port in the city, and the U.S. has decided to build a new port in the city.

Important news: Aqaba is a city of 100,000 people. It is a city of 100,000 people. It is a city of 100,000 people. It is a city of 100,000 people. It is a city of 100,000 people.

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Regent outlines Jordan's position on Iraqi situation:

Preserve dignity of people and unity of Iraq

Following is the full text of the speech by HRH Crown Prince Hassan, the Regent, delivered to the Arab Parliamentary Union meeting held in Amman Sunday:

Let me start by first asking you to recite sourat Al Fateha for our martyrs.

[WELCOME you in this Holy Month of Ramadan, the month in which the Holy Quran was revealed. I welcome you in Amman, the capital of Jordan, a country that takes pride in the Arab Nation and is deeply rooted in its origins. I do wish you a comfortable stay here in Amman and a successful conference to which our Arab Nation is looking forward. I am confident that His Majesty King Hussein, who with God's grace has recovered from his illness and is expected to return home soon, is following your deliberations with keen interest. He wishes you all success in your work and hopes that your conference will adopt a sensible stand that serves the interest of Iraq.]

This emergent high-level meeting comes to ascertain the solidarity of the Arab Nation representatives with the Iraqi people. The Iraqi people have suffered from violent bombardment, the death of men and women and the destruction of the infrastructure of their country. Nevertheless, they still uphold the dignity and pride of the Arabs.

Our stand of solidarity with the Iraqi people does not arise out of pity, but is meant to convey a message to our Iraqi

brethren that we are with them soul and heart, defending their dignity as well as their right to free and respectable life. In fact we want for them to lead a safe and secure life in their homeland among their fellow countrymen and to enjoy freedom, democracy and other human rights.

Let us agree from the outset that our solidarity with the Iraqi people and that our defending their basic rights is paramount to defending the people of any Arab country who might be subjected to aggression and suffering. It is true that this is an emergency meeting, yet in dealing with the issue at hand we should have a comprehensive view of the whole situation, otherwise we will have to schedule another emergency meeting. God forbid.

We, in Jordan, do know Iraq and its people; we know its glorious history and great civilisations. We also know that Baghdad, Kufah, Babel, and other Iraqi cities are live examples of the glory of the nation to which we belong. For it was on the banks of Tigris and the Euphrates that the civilisations of the Sumerians, Assyrians, Babylonians and Persians had flourished before the advent of the glorious Islamic civilisation, this civilisation of enlightenment and moderation. Throughout history, Iraq has witnessed successive settlements of peoples of diverse origins whose civilisations have contributed to the making of this country. Wherever one looks he will not fail to spot traces of these civilisations.

Our stance in Jordan concerning the Iraqi people rests on the following principles:

1. To preserve the dignity of the Iraqi people, and their right to lead a free life;

2. To maintain the continuity between Iraq's glorious past, present, and promising future;

3. To preserve the unity of the Iraqi soil;

4. To guarantee equal rights and justice to all people regardless of origin, religion or ethnic background. This is our practice in Jordan and it is what we aspire to see in every Arab country.

In order to avoid the recurrence of the tragedy of Iraq, we should reject any call or plan to divide or partition Iraq on geographical or ethnic grounds. We also reject the establishment of any state in its north or neighbourhood based on race or religion, because we do not approve of the Balkanisation of the region. In this connection we particularly appreciate the position adopted by our brethren in the Gulf states, Egypt and North African Arab countries with regard to the unity of the Iraqi soil and the dignity of its people. We similarly appreciate their keen desire for Iraq to return to the Arab ranks, for it is our contention that peace and security in our region cannot be achieved without Iraq.

We in Jordan have in principle rejected the policy of economic sanctions against any state, in particular our Arab countries. This is why we have rejected the blockade on Iraq, Libya, the Sudan, Palestine and for that

matter any other Arab country. This unfair policy which is directed against the basic rights of man to existence cannot accomplish its objectives; for it is quite unacceptable on humanitarian grounds and is futile from a political perspective. The right to existence has been the major concern of the New International Humanitarian Order in

We in Jordan believe in international legitimacy and the need to abide by it. We also believe that dialogue and the just implementation of international legitimacy in accordance with explicit criteria constitute the most effective means to ensure and guarantee the right of people to live in peace and security within their own borders. As

conventions or agreements or in accordance with a special resolution against a specific country as is the case with Iraq, should be compatible with certain criteria that specify the extent of adherence to such conventions and resolutions. Each and every country should accept such criteria or else it should be isolated and rejected by the international consensus and solidarity in order to implement such political resolutions.

The Iraqi people, who have suffered a great deal, should not be left without a programme of humanitarian aid which should secure their needs and relieve their suffering. Such a programme should be free from political pressure and interests, and should adopt a fair and just policy for the distribution of aid. If, in this conference, we manage to agree on such principles, we should be lending much needed support to the Iraqi people, for none of us would like these people to hold a grudge against the Arab Nation.

This conference should take the initiative to explicate with facts and figures the amount of suffering and to specify the means to put an end to such suffering in collaboration with the international organisations that have so far helped the Iraqi people with integrity and impartiality. In fact, several Islamic, European and Asian countries do show solidarity with the Iraqi people on purely humanitarian grounds. In this context, we should bear in mind that the reconstruction of what has been damaged by the inter-

sive bombardment requires remarkable efforts by the international community.

At this point we need to ask ourselves this question: "For how long should our efforts and viewpoints remain scattered to the winds, whenever an emergency or a crisis befalls this or that Arab country?" Indeed, we still hear conflicting voices and contradictory views in our quest for a mechanism and an implementation plan to confront the challenges and problems facing our nation. Similarly, we hear varied proposals ranging from calls for an emergency summit or a meeting of the Arab League Council to calls for a meeting of a limited number of Arab countries. Ours is the only region which has remained without a code of ethics governing multilateral and bilateral relations amongst its countries. Nor have we developed a strategy for handling crises and settling conflicts in an impartial manner. That explains why external interference in our region has become an easy, yet costly, matter. In this regard you, representatives of the Arab peoples, are no doubt capable of making up for this deficiency through devising the appropriate strategy and mechanisms. In so doing, we can prove to the entire world that this troubled region has, like other regions, its own identity and plans to face the future.

Wars have squandered and used up the riches of this region. The Iraqi-Iranian War, which lasted for eight long years, and the subsequent invasion of Kuwait are

but clear evidence of the need for this region to contain its own problems. Further, since 1991 the region has spent over \$300 billion on armament at a time when it was in a dire need to allocate this money in construction and human development.

Furthermore, the Islamic Republic of Iran, which lies between the two oil regions of the Gulf and Caspian Sea, should not remain outside our regional framework. We should also encourage its growing relations with the Arab countries and its willingness to engage in constructive dialogue with us.

As for our people in Palestine, we firmly and wholeheartedly support them in their quest to accomplish their goals and establish their independent state on their national soil. We are all of the opinion that the deterioration of the peace process in Palestine is to a large extent a consequence of the absence of consensus amongst us. It is also due to the fact that some countries do not honour the agreements they concluded with others, when they should do so. Peace and stability in the region cannot be accomplished if internal politics and partisan rivalry are transported to other parts of the world, outside their regional context, thus serving as a pretext for evading international and regional obligations.

May Allah guide you into doing what is best for our nation; and long live the Arab World, free and independent.

May the peace and blessings of Allah be with you.

'Our stand of solidarity with the Iraqi people...is meant to convey a message to our Iraqi brethren that we are with them heart and soul'

whose establishment I had the honour to participate. It is most gratifying for me that the United Nations have endorsed over 120 out of 170 resolutions put forward by the Independent Committee of the International Humanitarian Issues which I am honoured to have chaired for several years.

In the context of our solidarity with the Iraqi people we would like to see its prisoners of war released. Similarly, we would like to see all Arab prisoners of war return home. As long as there is a single Arab prisoner of war or a missing soldier who has not returned home in Kuwait or any other Arab or Islamic state, our duty dictates that we should exert honest, sincere, and transparent efforts in order to put an end to this tragic situation.

for use of force, we contend that it should be the last resort in accordance with the spirit and principles of the U.N. Charter, and only after all possible peaceful means have been exhausted.

In Jordan, we hold fast to the right of our citizens and the citizens of all countries in this region to live in peace, free of the threat of weapons of mass destruction. In this steadfast country, which lies in the heart of regional conflicts, we endeavour to keep the entire region free of weapons of mass destruction and the means of producing, storing and using them. However, this principal should apply to all with no exception, whatsoever.

The inspection of weapons of mass destruction, whether carried out in accordance with current international

Aqaba reveals earliest Nabataean-Roman settlement and possibly earliest known church

(Editor's note: This is the first of two articles on the latest excavations at Aqaba; the second article appears in tomorrow's Jordan Times.)

THIS YEAR'S Excavations by a team of archaeologists headed by Dr. S. Thomas Parker of North Carolina State University (USA) have clarified more aspects of at least three successive ancient towns that existed at Aqaba from the Nabataean to the early Islamic centuries. Among the significant achievements this year were:

- * new insights into the earliest town at Aqaba in the Classical period;
- * further excavation of what could be the world's oldest church and an associated cemetery;
- * important new information about the extent of the early Islamic town;
- * exposure of large new sections of the fortified Byzantine city wall;
- * further documentation of a major Nabataean ceramics industry; and,
- * a better understanding of the gradual "migration" of the town from the north-west towards the south-east during the millennium from the Nabataean-Early Roman to the Abbasid periods.

Aila was the name of the city in the Nabataean-Roman-Byzantine era (the Islamic era city has been called Ayla, spelled with a Y, to distinguish between the two adjacent sites). An Iron Age port-town known as Ezion-geber in the Bible existed in this region; it may be the ancient town excavated earlier this century at Tell el-Kheleifeh, north-west of modern Aqaba in the former no-man's land between Jordan and Israel. Tell el-Kheleifeh was abandoned in the 4th century BC, and there is no evidence of a Hellenistic occupation of the region between the 4th and 1st centuries BC (though Rhodian stamped jar handles from around 200 BC found at Tell el-Kheleifeh hint at a Hellenistic presence in the area).

Diodorus, writing in the 1st century BC, mentioned Aila as a Nabataean city, and in the early 1st century AD the Roman writer Strabo mentions Aila as a "polis," or city. Roman Aila had a strategic location at the south-eastern frontier of the Roman Empire. It was the terminus of a major trunk road built in the early 2nd century AD, the Via Nova Traiana (Trajan's New Road), that linked Damascus and Syria with the Red Sea. At the end of the 3rd century AD, a Roman legion, the Legion X Fretensis, was transferred to Aila from Jerusalem; but there must have been a garrison to protect the port city before the arrival of the 10th Fretensis Legion.

In the Byzantine period, bishops

from Aqaba are mentioned in the records of several ecclesiastical councils, starting in 325 AD, and architectural evidence of church structures has been collected over the years (such as capitals, chancel screen fragments, and inscribed crosses). Aila was a popular stop for pilgrims en route to or from Mt. Sinai, with "eight staging posts" separating Aila from Mt. Sinai, according to one pilgrim's report dated 570 AD. The same report mentions that ships from India sailed into Aila carrying "a variety of spices," indicating that the port saw considerable commercial activity well into the 6th century AD.

Surface remains of pre-Islamic Aila were first identified in 1990, some 150 metres north of the seashore, in a survey conducted by John Meloy, as part of the University of Chicago-led project on Islamic Ayla. This area of Roman Aila is situated some two kilometres south-east of Tell el-Kheleifeh, and just north-west of Islamic Ayla.

Scholars are still debating why the town at Aqaba has steadily moved towards the south during the last six thousand years — from Chalcolithic Tell Maquss near the airport, to Iron Age Tell el-Kheleifeh to the south-west, then to the south-east where Nabataean-Roman and Byzantine Aila flourished closer to the sea, then to early Islamic Ayla directly adjacent to the shoreline, then to middle/late Islamic Aqaba around the surviving castle north of the modern port, and finally to the modern town and port that have expanded yet more towards the south-east. One hypothesis that deserves further study, Parker says, is that the shoreline has receded to the south during the millennia, and thus the settlements at Aqaba have moved in tandem with it.

The 1998 season

During this year's seven-week season, the project identified architecture and cultural remains spanning a thousand years, from the late 1st Century BC to the 9th Century AD. Dr Parker said in a recent interview in Aqaba. He says this confirms that a substantial Nabataean commercial city and port existed at Aqaba by the 1st Centuries BC/AD, with large quantities of imported fine ware pottery, such as terra sigillata, and amphorae ceramic transport jars) from the western Mediterranean.

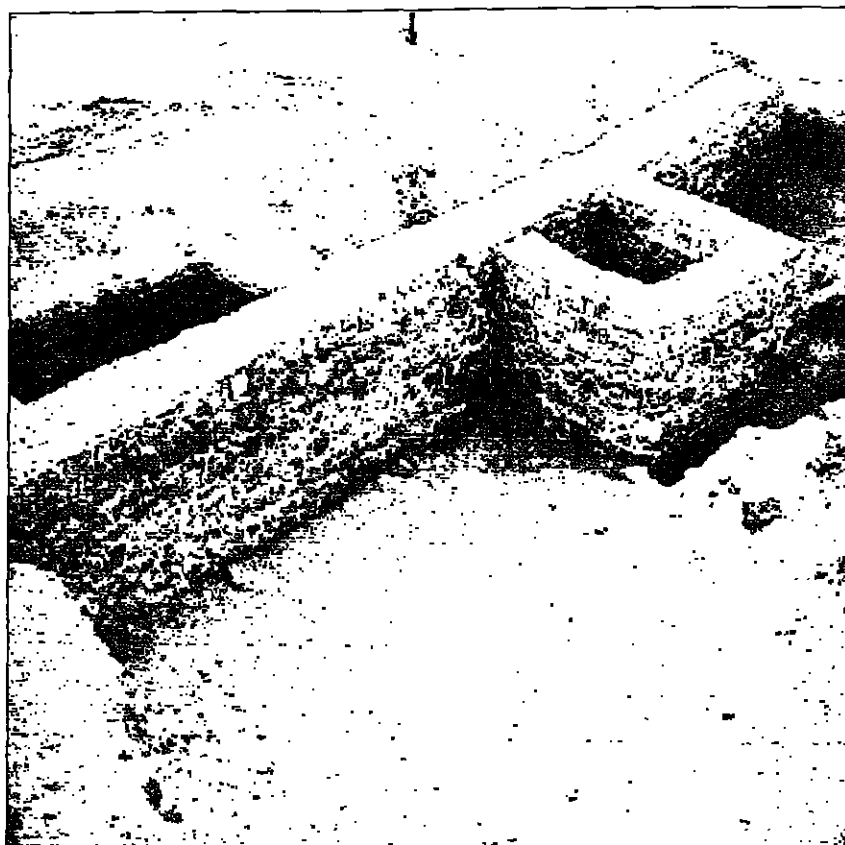
Excavations this year showed evidence of a stone dam from the earliest Nabataean/Early Roman town. In the water stored behind the dam were deposits of thick clay beds that in turn held evidence of raining activity. More

domestic mudbrick structures were excavated in the area of the Nabataean/Early Roman town, in the northernmost part of the excavation area, some half a kilometre north of the corniche boulevard along the

waterfront. Some of the walls of these early structures still stood some two metres high, and in places were associated with tawabeen (cooking ovens). The discovery of 25 tawabeen in one area, along with two circular installa-



General view of the excavated building that may be a very early church from the late 3rd or early 4th Century AD (photo by Rami G. Khouri).



A section of the Byzantine town wall with a tower at Aqaba, after restoration by the Department of Antiquities (photo courtesy of Dr Tom Parker)

tions interpreted as flour mills, suggests intensive baking activity, which went on into the early Byzantine period in the 4th Century AD.

Here as in other areas, the early structures were abandoned, probably in the 1st Century AD, but the area was re-used again perhaps a century later, when new mudbrick structures were built. It was again abandoned in the 4th Century AD, until the area was re-used in the 20th Century for military purposes. This pattern of an area's use, abandonment, and re-use seems common at Aqaba, Dr Parker noted.

Pottery retrieved from these earliest phases of the town included Nabataean painted and unpainted fine-ware pottery, imported terra sigillata from the eastern Mediterranean, and amphorae from the western Mediterranean, indicating trade links from these areas. A Nabataean/Early Roman dump excavated this year near the northern edge of the ancient town yielded rich deposits of pottery, ceramic slag, kiln wasters, charcoal, and other materials that clearly were the remains of a ceramics industry. Further evidence of this industry was found in another excavated area slightly to the south-east, which yielded natural clay, water channels, and large quantities of ceramic slag and kiln wasters.

A fascinating discovery this year was a Late Roman period jar filled with thousands of small fish bones, perhaps left over from the production of the fish sauce called garum. Garum remains from an Early Byzantine level at Petra have proved to be from Red Sea fish, suggesting that Aqaba was a production centre and/or a transit point for this popular commodity in Classical antiquity.

A Late Roman/Early Byzantine cemetery (probably from the 4th Century AD) has been clearly documented at Aqaba. It comprised vaulted mudbrick tombs, of which 24 have been excavated to date. Each contained a single articulated skeleton in an east-west alignment (the same alignment as the nearby church, suggesting a link between the cemetery and the church). The tombs were simple rectangular structures made of mudbricks, at the base of a one-metre-deep shaft. The 35 individual skeletons retrieved to date will generate useful information on the demography of Aqaba's population in the Early Byzantine period, Dr Parker said. Many sherds from imported Egyptian amphorae were associated with this cemetery.

The cemetery area was abandoned in the late 4th/early 5th Century AD, re-used to house domestic mudbrick structures in the late Byzantine period,

Ancient Heritage

A Jordan Times Series



By Rami G. Khouri

abandoned again for another century, and re-occupied again in the 8th Century early Islamic period (from which time a fine tabun and other associated installations were excavated this year). Jordan's and the world's earliest church?

One of the most exciting discoveries of the past two seasons is a large, vaulted mudbrick building that is being identified as a late 3rd/early 4th Century church — making it the earliest known church in Jordan and possibly in the world. The structure is aligned on an east-west axis and once measured at least 25 x 20 metres. It had internal arched doorways and vaults, and some painted walls. Remains of a staircase suggest that it may have had a second story.

Artifacts recovered from the building include coins, much glass (from church lamps?), metal objects, and pottery, including imported African red slip ware. A rectangular apse discovered this year strengthens the possibility that this was purposely built as a church. A coin of the Roman Emperor Diocletian from the foundations of the building dates to the last decade of the third century.

"All the architectural evidence, combined with its association with the adjacent Byzantine cemetery, suggests that this was designed as a Christian basilica," Dr Parker said. He noted possible parallels from Egypt, adding that the plentiful Egyptian pottery "may imply the presence of an Egyptian Christian community at Aila in the 4th Century. This would not be surprising, since we already have literary evidence for a Bishop at Aila in the year 325 AD."

The earliest known "church" facility in the world, from 230 AD, is a house that was converted for Christian worship at Dura Europus, on the Euphrates River. This may be the earliest known structure built specifically as a church.

The Roman Aqaba Project has been sponsored by North Carolina State University and is affiliated with the American Schools of Oriental Research (ASOR), and the American Centre of Oriental Research (ACOR) in Amman.

Daily Beat

A review of news from the Arabic Press

Manager of Central Vegetables Market accuses retailers of hiking produce prices

RETAIL PRODUCE traders are the ones hiking prices and benefiting from the current situation although there is no justification at all for raising prices of vegetables and fruits, said Mustafa Abu Isbaa, the manager of the Central Vegetables Market. He stressed that all types of produce are bought at the central market at low prices but consumers do not feel that because retailers are marking up the prices.

After a slight increase at the beginning of the Holy Month of Ramadan, prices of vegetables began to drop gradually, Abu Isbaa said. He expects the prices to continue declining due to the large volumes of produce flowing to the central market. "The prices of fruits did not change for several months as the volume received is of good quality and carries a reasonable price," Abu Isbaa added.

He emphasized that retail prices should be tied to wholesale prices and that retailers should take into consideration the current prices at the central market because they are the link between the market and the consumer.

Meanwhile, the inspectors working at the Amman Industry and Trade Directorate have issued 427 tickets to violators during the first week of Ramadan. The violations were mostly for selling at prices higher than those announced and for selling food unfit for human consumption. There were also some complaints against bakeries.

According to Mohammad Abu Hazim, the chief of the Amman Industry and Trade Directorate,

the inspectors are working continuously and intensively from early morning until 11:00 p.m. He said that all necessary supplies are available in the market in sufficient quantities. "There are 45 tonnes of mutton, 60 tonnes of beef and a shipment carrying another 40 tonnes of mutton is also expected to arrive. Furthermore, there are eight containers loaded with 20 tonnes of fish and 12,000 birds at the slaughter house," Abu Hazim indicated. He said that inspection tours have confirmed the availability of sufficient quantities of rice on the market at acceptable prices. "Australian rice is selling at 420 fils, American rice at 410 fils and first grade Egyptian rice at 350 fils," he added.

In another development, the president of the association grouping owners of bakeries revealed that the consumption of bread has dropped by 50 per cent during the past few days of Ramadan. He said the lower prices of bread was an incentive to the decline in consumption but "the real consumption rate as a result of the lower prices cannot be accurately measured except after the end of Ramadan."

The president of the association warned against the resumption of smuggling because of the lower prices and asked that strict measures be implemented to prevent using flour or bread for uses other than human consumption (Al Aswaq + Al Ra'i + Al Dustour).

London optimistic it will remain on top of Europe's financial heap

LONDON (AFP) — Although Britain is staying out of the euro and Frankfurt will gain new prominence as home of the European Central Bank, analysts believe that London can remain the financial hub of Europe. Placed in time zones between Asia and New York, European markets fill a key role in the round-the-clock cycle of international dealing.

Until now, there has been no serious rival to the City of London's famous square mile, followed by second-tier markets in the other European capitals.

But Frankfurt's stature is growing as home base to the powerful single European currency, while Britain, which is not joining the

first wave of 11 EU countries in the euro, risks being sidelined. However, analysts believe that London's critical mass of expertise and its attraction as a place to live for the world's financial high-flyers will help the City survive.

Chief economist at Deutsche Bank Group in Frankfurt, Norbert Walter, said that as long as the market continued to believe that Britain would enter the euro, London's position "will stay — London will stay number one." "Even if Britain kept out of the euro long term, I suggest that the infrastructure would make London the number one," he said.

However, the Corporation of the City of London — the financial district's municipal authority — says it is not sitting back.

"There's no complacency. We're on top now and we're going to stay there. It's the biggest market in the world. We're going to be making sure that we offer the deepest markets from here on," a spokesman said.

Already, London has begun to reshape in response to the threat. The London Stock Exchange has entered an agreement with Frankfurt to begin limited trading cooperation from January, with a view eventually to creating a single trading platform for the top 300 stocks in both cities.

Other European bourses have been invited to join at some point, raising the prospect of a single European super stock market.

Representatives of the bourses met here to discuss the project on Friday. And earlier this year, London's futures market, the LIFFE, took the radical measure of adopting electronic trading, with heavy job losses as a result.

This was in order to match mounting competition from the smaller, but more efficient Deutsche Terminbörse in Frankfurt, which has snapped up an increasing share of trade in German mark futures contracts.

As it stands, London remains the unquestionable king of the castle.

Although the stock market is far behind the colossus of Wall Street, its capitalisation tops

more than \$2.1 trillion, dwarfing the \$989.32 billion of runner up Frankfurt's Deutsche Boerse and \$894.72 billion of the Paris bourse.

In foreign exchange, London tops not just Europe, but the rest of the world, with 32 per cent of the world market, compared to 18 per cent for the United States and five per cent for Germany and four per cent for France.

London has a vastly superior share of international bank lending, at more than 20 per cent in the first quarter this year, compared to about

12 per cent for Tokyo, and less than 10 per cent for France, Germany and the United States.

At Deutsche Bank's London office, senior economist Michael Lewis said, "I don't think there's a problem. You see construction sites all over the City."

"There's no doubt that London will remain the centre of the world's exchange. The share of London has been increasing," he said.

Besides, "you've got to attract people to Frankfurt. I lived there. It's not easy."

A.F.M. TRADE Sunday, 27-12-98

ACCESS 4646868

Company Open Price Close Price Change

BANKS

ARAB BN	211.000	210.000	-0.47%
NTL BN	1.330	1.330	-1.51%
CAIRO AMMAN BN	2.340	2.330	-0.08%
BN OF JO	2.290	2.280	-0.78%
MIDDLE EAST BN	1.040	1.020	-1.92%
INDUSTRIAL DEV. BN	1.410	1.410	0.00%
THE HOUSING BN	2.690	2.710	+0.74%
JO KUNWAT BN	1.560	1.570	+0.64%
JO GULF BN	0.690	0.690	0.00%
JO ISLAMIC BN	1.660	1.700	+2.41%
JO INVEST BN	1.400	1.410	+0.71%
PHILADELPHIA BN	0.590	0.560	-5.08%

BANKS INDEX 275.650 point = -0.03%

INSURANCE

JO. FRENCH INS	2.700	2.720	+0.74%
JO. GULF INS	1.450	1.390	-4.14%
ARAB UNION INTL INS	1.070	1.120	+4.67%

INSURANCE INDEX 123.200 point = -0.19%

SERVICES

ELECTRIC POWER	1.460	1.460	0.00%
HOTEL & TOURISM	9.990	10.200	+2.03%
SHIPPING LINES	1.120	1.060	-5.36%
PORTFOLIO SECURITIES	0.780	0.790	+1.28%
JO. INTL TRADING CENT	0.300	0.290	-3.33%
AL-ZAKA FOR EDU	0.840	0.840	0.00%
ARAB INTL FOR INVS & E	1.320	1.320	0.00%
UNION LAND DEV	0.540	0.570	+5.56%
UNIFIED LAND TRANS	1.110	1.100	-0.90%

SERVICES INDEX 106.000 point = -0.09%

INDUSTRY

CEMENT	3.680	3.640	-1.30%
PHOSPHATE	1.470	1.480	+0.68%
ARAB POTASH	2.850	2.710	-4.91%
PETROLEUM REFINERY	10.150	10.150	0.00%
THE IND. COMM. & AGRICULT	1.150	1.150	0.00%
ARAB PHARMACEUTICAL	2.560	2.540	-0.78%
CERAMIC IND	1.220	1.200	-1.64%
TOBACCO & CIGARET	1.220	1.200	-1.64%
JO. PIPES	1.080	1.080	0.00%
ARAB CHEMICAL DETROIT	2.290	2.300	+0.43%
NTL STEEL	0.500	0.500	0.00%
DAR AL BAWA	4.900	5.000	+2.04%
MIDDLE EAST COMPLEX	0.570	0.580	+1.75%
JO. STEEL	0.570	0.580	+1.75%
ARAB ALUMINIUM	1.880	1.870	-0.53%
CHLORINE	1.240	1.240	0.00%
LIVESTOCK & POULTRY	0.390	0.390	0.00%
NTL IND	0.390	0.370	-5.13%
PETRO - CHEMICAL	0.330	0.350	+6.06%
CHEMICAL & VEGETABLE	1.000	0.990	-1.00%
ROCKWOOL	0.310	0.300	-3.23%
JO. CHEMICAL	5.400	5.670	+5.00%
UNIVERSAL CHEMICAL	1.050	1.100	+4.76%
GENERAL INVS	3.100	3.000	-3.23%
NTL CABLE	0.680	0.680	0.00%
SULFUR - CHEMICALS	0.380	0.380	0.00%
ARAB CENTER FOR PHAR	1.170	1.180	+0.85%
UNIVERSAL MODERN IND	0.610	0.630	+3.28%
IND. RESOURCES	0.440	0.450	+2.27%
NEW CAPLES	0.610	0.610	0.00%
NTL ALUMINIUM	0.690	0.690	0.00%
INDUSTRY INDEX	75.190	74.000	-1.61%

PARALLEL

JO. TRADING FACILITIES	0.430	0.420	-2.33%
JO. INTL INS	0.740	0.780	+5.41%
ADVANCED PHAR	0.550	0.550	0.00%
MEDICAL APPLIANCES	0.370	0.390	+5.41%
AL DAWLAN	0.560	0.560	0.00%
ARAB INVESTORS	0.200	0.200	0.00%
ARAB INTL TRADE	0.210	0.210	0.00%
OPTICAL & AUDIO	0.500	0.510	+2.00%
INAMICO	0.280	0.280	0.00%
TEXTILE & PLASTIC	0.220	0.240	+9.09%
MIDDLE EAST PHAR 90	0.570	0.570	0.00%
AL-RAS	0.520	0.530	+1.92%
UNITED ENS. IND	0.210	0.200	-4.76%
ZAKA	1.450	1.520	+4.83%
ARAB JO. INVS	0.980	1.030	+5.10%
GRAND INDEX	166.38	164.00	-1.40%

Middle East Investment Bank finds 51% partner

AMMAN — The Middle East Investment Bank (MEIB) and the Societe Generale Lebanese European Bank (SGLEB) have signed a partnership agreement, under which the SGLEB will own 51 per cent of the bank's capital, and will assume its executive management for eight years.

The agreement was signed for the SGLEB by its Board Chairman Maurice Sahnawi and for the MEIB by its Chairman Ali Hamdi Mango.

Under the agreement, the MEIB's name will be changed to "Socitee General-Jordan" as of 1999.

The SGLEB is a Lebanese public shareholding company. The French Societe Generale owns 50 per cent of the capital of the Lebanese company.

HOROSCOPE

FORECAST FOR DECEMBER, MONDAY 28, 1998

By Linda C. Black, Tribune Media Services, Inc.

ARIES: (March 21 to April 19) You're lucky, charming, and you've learned how to play by the rules. You're drawing admiring glances from powerful people. They're basing their thoughts not only on what you're doing now, but also on what you've done in the past. Don't let an opportunity slip through your fingers. Tell others you're ready for more responsibility, then prove it.

TAURUS: (April 20 to May 20) You have bounty beyond your wildest dreams today, even if it looks like a hassle. Don't spend time dwelling on the negative. Instead, look around you. Friends and family need your attention; that's where you're lucky in love. You've got plenty of it. Stay in touch with that, and the hassles you're experiencing won't amount to a hill of beans.

GEMINI: (May 21 to June 21) Somebody's leaning over you today, trying to get you to do something on your list. If you know how, you'd have done it by now, right? Well, when the going gets tough, you get cranking, and this situation is no exception. You can learn what needs to be done, even if it's difficult. Go ahead and face it and get on with life.

CANCER: (June 22 to July 21) One of your friends has been telling you what you should be doing, and you may find that a little annoying. Actually, this person has your best interests at heart. The advice may be difficult for you to follow, but in this case, it could be wise. If the other person is heading in your direction, let him or her drive.

LEO: (July 22 to August 21) Don't let your mind wander. The impression you're making now is a lasting one. Important people are watching. Yes, right there in the front row, that guy with the funny hat could be an agent. So put on your very best performance, no matter what stage life has provided for you to play on.

VIRGO: (August 22 to September 22) You're making things happen almost by magic, but it's not magic, really. It's your attitude. You're in such a good mood, it's contagious. People want to do whatever you ask. You're used to doing what other people ask, and sometimes struggling to keep your own feelings hidden. Today it's not necessary.

LIBRA: (September 23 to October 22) Concentrate today. You're getting something you want for your home. You've got the edge, because you're more patient in dealing with salesmen and figuring out your finances. Normally, you'd just let someone else do it for you. Spend your time doing something you can do better.

SCORPIO: (October 23 to November 21) Looks like somebody else will be able to make the winning play. Toss this person the ball, or the information, or even the money. This could be as simple as giving 20 bucks to your partner, who goes to the store for you. Spend your time doing something you can do better.

SAGITTARIUS: (November 22 to December 21) Don't get bogged down in a meaningless routine today. Instead, turn it into a structure that makes your work day easier. There's no shortage of jobs, but you'd rather be outside playing, and it could seem like 12 eternities between now and when you can get there. Hang in there.

CAPRICORN: (December 22 to January 20) Looks like you're getting all the love you need, and more. You're attracting attention, not only from people you know, but from people you haven't even met yet. Don't be shy. This is perfectly natural, and it's a reflection of how nice you're being. When you're generous to others, they return the gesture in kind.

AQUARIUS: (January 21 to February 19) If you could stay in a second. Well, it looks like with a little bit of planning, you can do that tonight. You might have to go to someone else's home, if you don't have a fireplace, but that's OK. It's the homey ambience you're after.

PISCES: (February 20 to March 20) Sometimes you get a little skittish. It's a combination of your own sensitivity and the conditions in effect. But today, those conditions help you settle down and pay attention to what you're doing. And when this happens, miracles can occur. You're trying to untangle a bureaucratic mess, and this increased stability will give you just the boost you need.

Birth Stone of December: Turquoise — Zircon

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Wihdat, Homentmen promoted to First Division

By a Staff Reporter

AMMAN — Al Wihdat will join the country's top teams in the first Division basketball championship next year after winning the Second Division title following their 74-63 win over Fuheis.

Best known for dominating the country's soccer scene, Al Wihdat have now made basketball their newest area of domination after only the second year in the sport.

They will be joined by Homentmen whose only loss was to Al Wihdat. They took the second slot back to country's premier division after an absence of three years.

This year, the Jordan Basketball Federation (JBF) decided that two instead of one team will be promoted making the total number of First Division

Team	P	W	L	SF	SA	Pts
Wihdat*	7	7	-	744	342	14
Homentmen*	7	6	1	469	385	13
Fuheis	7	5	2	526	393	12
Ebbin	7	4	3	418	476	11
Ashrafieh	7	3	4	369	388	10
Abu Nusair	7	2	5	343	421	9
Rayeh	7	1	6	322	474	7
Samma	7	-	7	173	485	6

teams eight instead of six.

The First Division includes Al Orthodoxy, Al Ahli, Al Jazireh, Al Jalil, Al Hussein and Al Jeel.

The only unbeaten team of the competition, Al Wihdat were led by coach Ghaith Al Najjar who previously trained Al Ahli. They scored six of their seven wins easily passing the 100-mark.

Al Fuheis finished third, followed by Ebbin, Ashrafieh, Abu Nusair, Rayeh and Samma.

Al Watani, a former First Division team who were relegated last year failed to participate this season. Also missing were teams like Gazzer Hashem, Karak and Sahab.

The JBF this year organized only three other events: the First Division and the Under-14 won by Al Orthodoxy, and the Under-16 won by Al Jazireh.

The women's, juniors, and Under-22 were cancelled while the JBF is discussing holding the Under-

18 with the concerned clubs.

The national teams have not been regrouped throughout the summer with the JBF entangled in a controversy with Al Jazireh Club which led to the JBF's mass resignation.

Although that was later retracted, national teams failed to take part in the recently concluded Asian Games where Jordan had obtained fourth place in 1986.

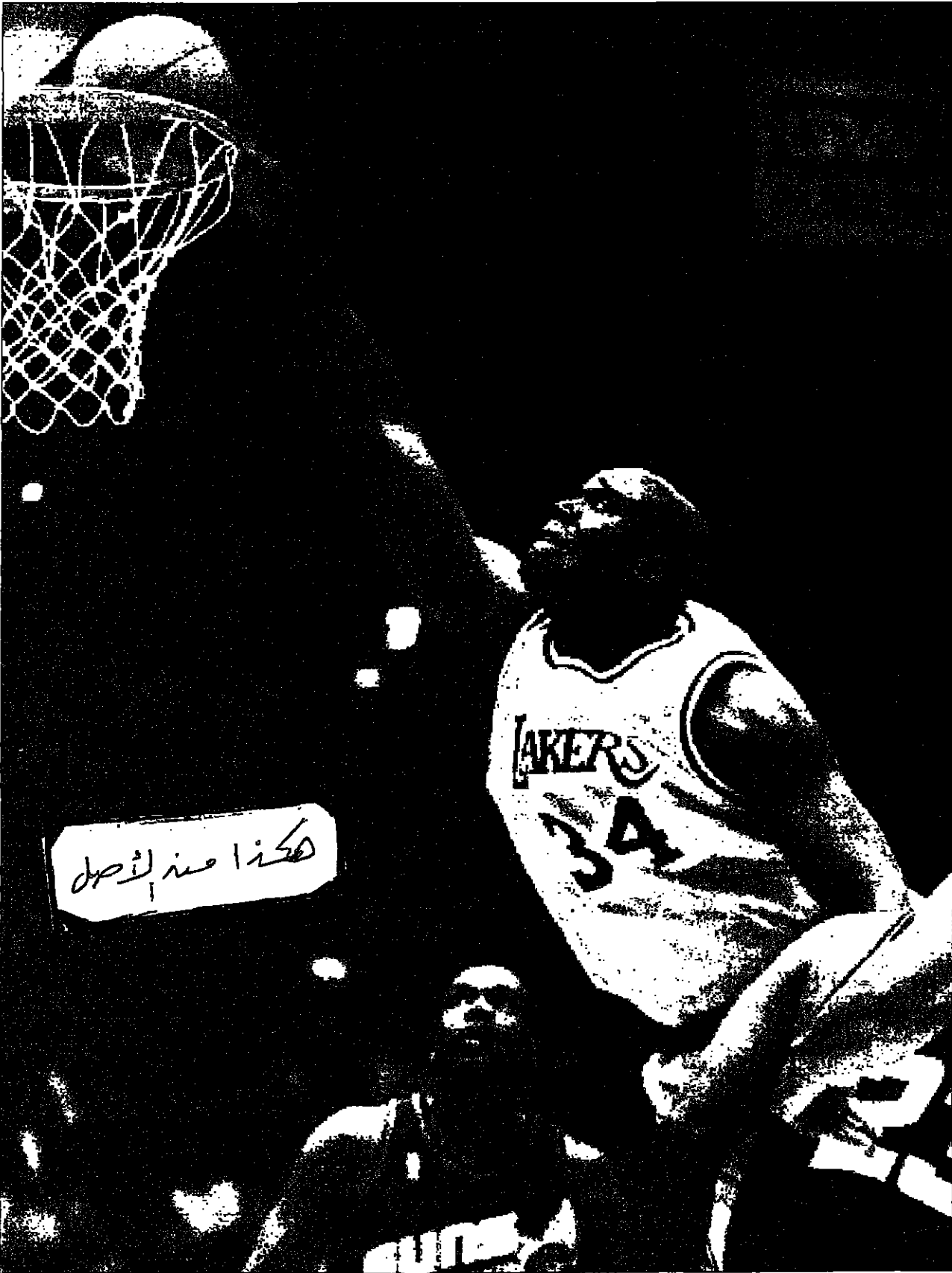
A look at the NBA lockout

By The Associated Press

- Total days of season missed: 54.
- Games lost Saturday: 13.
- Total games missed: 373.
- Earliest estimated date season can start: Jan. 22.
- Negotiations: David Stern and Billy Hunter did not meet Saturday, and nothing was scheduled for Sunday, with the league having set a Jan. 7 deadline to cancel the season.
- Projected player salary losses (through Jan. 22): \$480 million.

• Sunday's best canceled game: Houston at Los Angeles Lakers, 9:30 p.m. The speed and fadeaway jumper of Rockets center Hakeem Olajuwon meets the power of the Lakers Shaquille O'Neal.

• Quote of the day: "We basically spent a lot of time covering old ground and restating what our concerns were. I'm not sure when David will be back from Aspen, but I'll speak by phone with him or Russ (Granik)." — Union director Billy Hunter, commenting about Wednesday's meeting.



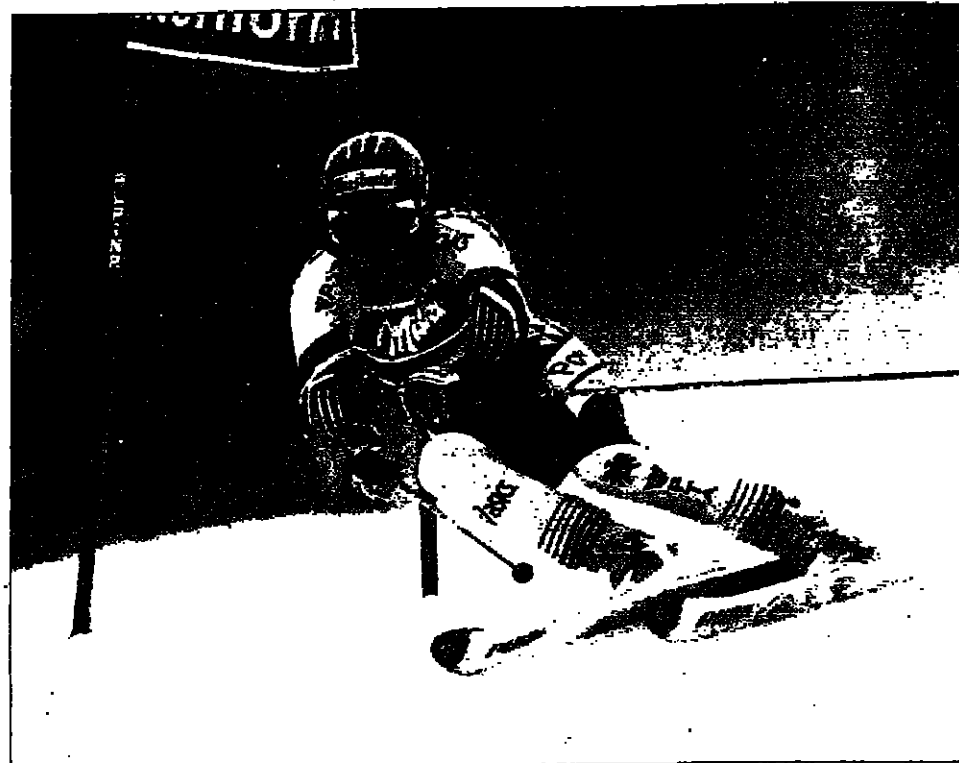
Shaquille O'Neal

Wachter wins women's giant slalom

SEMMERING, Austria (AFP) — Anita Wachter produced a sizzling second run to overtake her Austrian teammate Alexandra Meissnitzer and win the World Cup women's giant slalom race here on Sunday.

Wachter, a 31-year-old veteran, continued her return from a horrendous knee injury incurred in a fall at Cortina in Italy last season to overhaul in-form Meissnitzer and win with a combined time of 2min 07.90secs.

Meissnitzer, the overall World Cup leader and winner of five previous races



Austrian Alexandra Meissnitzer passes a gate during the first run of the women's World Cup Giant Slalom in Austrian Semmering (AFP photo)

this season, led after the first run but finished 0.74sec behind Wachter after the veteran's superb second run.

Andrine Flemmen of Norway, the winner at Sölden, Austria, earlier this year, was third, 1.43sec in arrears of Wachter.

It was Wachter's ninth career World Cup giant slalom lead. She was the 1993 World Cup champion.

Flo Jo's death marks memorable year in athletics

PARIS (AFP) — The old adage "never speak ill of the dead" was shattered on September 21 when Florence Griffith Joyner, or Flo-Jo the queen of the athletics body suits, died aged just 38 — reigniting the old debate of did she or didn't she take drugs.

Her death, from an epileptic seizure which many within the sport attributed to her use of drugs during her career, brought back unwanted memories to the athletics community of the infamous 1988 Olympics in Seoul when Ben Johnson ran away with the 100 metres gold and then ran away from reporters as he was leaving the country in disgrace following his testing positive for steroids.

Johnson, now 37, also crept into the headlines in 1998 as he was hired for free to coach Israeli athletes, who were also graced by the presence of another former drugs cheat Nigeria's 1996 women's long jump Olympic champion Chioma Ajunwa, and later applied to have his lifetime ban rescinded for domestic matters.

Griffith Joyner, married to Al Joyner the 1984 triple jump Olympic champion, the brother of legendary heptathlete Jacky, was as dominant in the women's sprints winning both Olympic titles.

She broke the 200 metres world record in the final, in an astonishing 21.34 seconds, having broken the 100 metres mark, with an equally astonishing time of 10.49 seconds, in the Olympic trials.

However, the fact she retired just before random drugs testing was introduced, her improvement from minor medalist in the 1987 world championships to all conquering record breaker the next year, facial hair growth and a massive enlargement of her physique meant that to many she remained an Olympic champion of as equally dubious credentials as Johnson.

Both the International Olympic Committee (IOC) and athletics' world governing body IAAF sprang to her defence with athletics supremo Primo Nebiolo being particularly vehement in her defence.

"Her family have had to endure irresponsible media



reports that have sought to tarnish her reputation without any real proof," the Italian said.

Though Griffith Joyner, who went on to do numerous works for charity after a brief acting career, never tested positive for any banned drugs both her early death and the doctors

refusal to reveal her medical records means her athletics record will always be open to question.

Flo-Jo, who was honoured later in the year by the IAAF never lived to see her records broken but it only looks a matter of time before the outstanding Marion Jones breaks the 100 metres mark.

Jones, the world champion at the distance, came closest when she ran 10.65 at altitude in Johannesburg at September's World Cup meet having twice run 10.71 earlier in the season, but the 23-year-old remains relaxed about when she will break the record.

"How much faster can I go? Let's just get under 10.49 first," Jones said.

Even Jones, though, is not infallible, succumbing to her first defeat in 38 events when the ageless Heike Drechsler beat her in the long jump at the World Cup to add to the European title she captured in Budapest in August.

The European championships, apart from Denmark's Kenyan-born dual world record holder and dual world champion Wilson Kipketer finding the 800 metres title beyond him after coming back from a severe bout of malaria, was

remarkable for the performance of the 400 metres hurdles champion Pawel Januszewski of Poland, who had been read the last rites last November.

Januszewski, who ran a national record to overhaul race favourite Ruslan Maschenko in the final 200 metres, went into a coma

ATHLETICS IN 1998

last November after a car crash and still runs despite having a blood clot on the brain.

"I was told I would never walk again, but Poles never take no for an answer and once I had achieved that I thought anything was possible," Januszewski said.

"This though is just unbelievable, it's a bonus I could not have imagined even a fortnight before the championships," he added.

The European Championships may have been hit by absenteeism but they could thank their lucky stars they were not the organisers of the Commonwealth Games, who suffered hugely because they refused to bow to the athletes' demands by paying neither prize money nor appearance fees.

The Games, which took place in Kuala Lumpur, descended into farce when it developed into a slanging match between organisers and Nebiolo over the World Cup being scheduled a few days before the athletics started.

The Games, though, did produce the race of the season as Trinidad's extrovert sprinter Ato Boldon denied Frankie Fredericks of Namibia the 100 metres

title, ending the nice man of athletics hopes of winning a 'blue ribbon' championship.

The Commonwealth also produced further proof that Welshman Christian Malcolm is the man to watch in the sprints as he captured the silver medal in the 200 metres to add to the 100 and 200 world junior titles won in July — a good pay-off for his decision not to sign professional football forms with Queens Park Rangers.

Nebiolo, despite being heavily criticised for his autocratic behaviour, has almost singlehandedly kept athletics in the front rank of sports.

He saw his brainchild of the Golden League, a million-dollar bonus share out between any athlete who won all seven Golden League meetings in selected disciplines and the Grand Prix Final, make its debut with mixed results.

The money made athletes give higher priority to playing safe and win the events than try for a world record, which is what most of the spectators pay to see, and the organisers will have to be careful that the already disenchanted crowds don't turn their backs on the sport as money becomes the sole object and not breaking records.

Three athletes ended up sharing the million dollars trough, Jones, and the two world-record-breaking athletes of the year Haile Gebrselassie of Ethiopia, who regained both the 5,000 and 10,000 metres records, and Moroccan Hicham El Guerrouj, who broke the 1500 metres mark.

However, American 400 metres hurdler Brian Bronson cut the saddest sight as he missed out on a share of the kitty when he made a mess of the final hurdle and faded into sixth. Bronson, who also lost out at the 1997 world championships taking bronze when he was favourite, had tempted fate before the race when asked what he might do if he won the money.

"I'll make some investments," he said. Bronson did not get the chance to make those investments but he earned more out of the defeat — the meaning of the word hubris.

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	Shows: 12:15, 2:15, 6:30, 8:30, 10:30	Shows: 12:15, 2:15, 6:30, 8:30, 10:30	Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 6:30, 8:30, 10:30	Shows: 12:15, 2:15, 6:15, 8:30, 10:30	Shows: 6:15, 8:30, 10:45	Shows: 6:15, 8:30, 10:45	

Listings for films and showing times as received by cinemas and their advertising agencies.

LOCAL SPORTS SCENE



JD10m, web site for 9th Pan-Arab Games

AMMAN — The Cabinet has allocated JD10 million of its budget for the Pan-Arab Games, which will be held here Aug. 15-31, 1999, Amman Games Director Isam Aridah said. Aridah added that new regulations will be set up to control expenses and focus on holding training camps for national and Arab teams in Amman. The director said the Municipality of Greater Amman will end construction of the JD1.5 million Olympic-size swimming pool and the JD4.6 million indoor court by next June. The Games will soon have a web site and Internet facilities at the Games headquarters, according to Aridah.

Karate team to train in Belgrade

AMMAN — The Jordan Karate Federation (JKF) said the Yugoslav federation has officially invited the national team to a two-week training camp in Belgrade. JKF sources added that the federation will study the invitation to the camp, which will help the team prepare for next year's Pan-Arab Games.

National tennis team to get Bulgarian coach

AMMAN — The Jordan Tennis Federation has nominated a Bulgarian coach to prepare and supervise the national teams for next summer's Pan-Arab Games. Two of Iraq's top-ranked coaches currently train the team which has not had competitive results in any recent regional tournament.

Compiled by Ahmad Khatib

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SPORTS IN BRIEF

Wynalda returns to the States

LONDON (AFP) — United States international striker Eric Wynalda has failed to secure a contract with English Premiership strugglers Charlton. The London club have lost their last six matches and are in danger of relegation but manager Alan Curbishley said Sunday he had not been impressed by Wynalda when the former Saarbrücken striker trialled at The Valley. The experienced forward, 29, has won close to 100 caps for the United States and has scored 32 goals in international football. "Wynalda has gone back because I didn't think he was better than what I had," Curbishley said. "I'm not going to spend on someone I don't believe is going to improve my squad."

Fernandez confirms for New Zealand classic

AUCKLAND (AFP) — American Mary Joe Fernandez has been confirmed to contest the women's international tennis tournament here next month. Tournament director Richard Palmer said Sunday he had received confirmation. Fernandez of Miami has won seven WTA singles titles, 19 doubles titles, two Olympic doubles titles, two Grand Slam doubles titles and more than \$5 million in her 13-year career. In 1985 Fernandez became the youngest player at 14 years and eight days to win a U.S. Open. The second youngest was Jennifer Capriati in 1990. Other late inclusions to the international lineup are Argentinian Paola Suarez and Germany's Andrea Glass.

Arsenal's Anelka out for 3 weeks

LONDON (AFP) — Arsenal's French striker Nicolas Anelka is out for up to three weeks with an ankle injury following the Gunners 1-0 Premiership victory at home to West Ham on Saturday. Arsenal coach Arsene Wenger claimed the blow was a major setback to Arsenal's resurgence title chances. Anelka was superb in the opening half hour and Wenger believed it was Anelka's best 30 minutes of the season before he went off. "Maybe the fact that Ian Wright was back here at Highbury for the first time inspired Nicolas but he has been improving from game to game," said Wenger. "When we lost him it was a blow to our balance in the team. He will be out for a while, probably between two and three weeks. It's a big blow as he's the kind of player we don't have in the squad."

Freund leaves for Tottenham

BONN (R) — Borussia Dortmund midfielder Steffen Freund has signed a 3-1/2 year contract with Tottenham Hotspur after the teams agreed a 2 million mark (\$1.2 million) transfer fee. German sport news agency SID reported on Sunday. Dortmund said Freund would move to the English premier league side during the current winter break in Germany after signing a contract through to the summer of 2003. Freund was in Germany's squad at this year's World Cup finals but has struggled with injury. His Dortmund contract would have expired at the end of the season. Freund, who has played in 21 matches for the German team, has clashed over tactics with Dortmund trainer Michael Skibbe this year and spent five straight matches sitting on the bench.

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Night search starts for missing Sydney-Hobart crewman

Yachts in trouble as wild weather hits fleet

SYDNEY (AFP) — Rescuers were searching Sunday for a crewman swept overboard during the Sydney to Hobart yacht race as the fleet of the premier blue water event was battered by heavy winds and seas.

The crewman on Australian yacht Sword of Orion was swept overboard Sunday and was still missing as dark fell over the fleet, search and rescue spokesman Ryan Hill told Sky News.

Several aircraft carrying night vision equipment had been dispatched to search for the missing yachtman, but the chances of finding him in the heavy seas appeared dim, Hill said.

Twenty of the 115 boats that departed Sydney Harbour on Saturday had withdrawn amid the worst storms to hit the race since 1993, organisers said.

Rescuers responded to a mayday call from one boat that rolled in heavy seas while at least one other, the Winston Churchill, was abandoned by its crew, national television reported. Rescue teams winched three injured sailors to safety after the Winston Churchill was dismasted and rescued the other nine crew members from a liferaft, according to the Australian Broadcasting Corporation.

Several other boats were reported damaged and organisers said some were making toward shore to seek shelter from winds gusting to 70 knots.

Race director Biddy Badenoch said conditions were the worst the race had seen since 1993, when gale-force winds forced 66 of the 104 starters to retire. But the race leader, American maxi Sayonara, and Australian maxi Brindabella appeared to have outrun the most severe winds and continued on record pace as they crossed Bass Strait late Sunday in winds of up to 45 knots.

For better and worse, Vikings and Chiefs set NFL records

NASHVILLE (AFP) — Minnesota and Kansas City won Saturday to complete American football record-setting seasons, one the Vikings might recall forever and one the Chiefs would prefer to forget.

Minnesota became the highest-scoring team in National Football League history here with a 26-16 victory over Tennessee, a triumph that made the Vikings only the third club in NFL history to finish a season 15-1.

"It probably won't hit me until April that we had such a great season," said Vikings defensive tackle John Randle. "We have bigger goals than 15-1, though."

The Vikings had already sealed a first-round bye and home-field edge throughout the playoffs. On Saturday they claimed an NFL season record with 556 points, 15 more than the old mark set by Washington in 1983.

"Hopefully we can go to the playoffs and continue our success," said star rookie receiver Randy Moss. "It really doesn't mean much until we reach the top."

That goal, a Super Bowl crown, is a distant dream for Kansas City, a 31-24 winner at Oakland in the day's only other NFL

game. It was the Raiders' 17th loss in their past 19 games against the Chiefs.

Kansas City ended a disappointing 7-9, the first losing record in coach Marty Schottenheimer's career, and made 12 penalties to finish with 156 for the season, equaling an NFL mark set by Oakland in 1994 and 1996.

"It's a dubious distinction that I'd rather not go out with," said Schottenheimer. "Game after game, it just mounted up. It's all water under the bridge now."

Randall Cunningham, receivers Moss and Cris Carter and kicker Gary Anderson have the Vikings sailing along.

Cunningham, who signed a five-year contract extension on Christmas Eve, played the whole way with a broken bone in his left hand. The right-handed passer completed 16-of-18 second half passes for 156 yards and two touchdowns. For the game he was 23-of-35 for 235 yards.

"A 15-1 record is awesome," Cunningham said. The Vikings trailed 13-8 at half-time but Moss caught a five-yard touchdown pass and Carter

scored on a 38-yard pass play, the 101st touchdown reception of his career.

Anderson had three field goals and an extra point to become the NFL's first perfect kicker for an entire season. Anderson converted on 35-of-35 field goal attempts and all 59 conversions after touchdowns. "I'm just so excited because of the pressure during the last month just kept building and building," Anderson said.

He also set a single-season record for points by a kicker with 164, breaking the 15-year-old mark of 161 by Mark Moseley of Washington.

"We are extremely proud of Gary Anderson," said Vikings coach Dennis Green. "The first time in the history of the game — a perfect season. He is a big addition to our team."

Carter finished with six catches for 78 yards and Moss had five receptions for 32 yards.

The Vikings also broke the NFL record for most touchdown receptions by a receiving duo with 28 by Moss (17) and Carter (11). Jerry Rice was involved in two 27-touchdown seasons for San Francisco in 1987 and 1989.

The Vikings won their final eight games after a 27-24 loss at Tampa Bay on November 1, surpassing Denver for this season's best NFL record and matching the 1984 San Francisco 49ers and the 1985 Chicago Bears at 15-1.

When the Vikings open the playoffs in two weeks, they will try to snap a 1-5 showing in post-season play under Green and erase an 0-4 legacy of Super Bowl losses dating to 1970.

"We're going into the playoffs with the best team we have ever taken to the playoffs in the last six years," Green said.

The Oilers finished 8-8 for the third season in a row in the team's final game as the Oilers. Tennessee will be known as the Titans in 1999, dropping the nickname they took when departing Houston.

"There was a lot of emotion," said Oilers owner Bud Adams, who founded the team in 1959. "I picked the name in 1959, that's a lot of time and memories. We're ready to start our new era as the Titans and ready to go forward."

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Arafat accuses Israel of stalling peace process

GAZA CITY (AP) — Palestinian President Yasser Arafat said Sunday that Israel had "frozen completely" the peace process and was refusing to implement the latest land-for-security accord.

The accusation came despite assurances from Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu that Israel would continue carrying out the agreement regardless of Israeli national elections expected in spring or early summer.

Arafat was quoted by Egypt's Middle East News Agency as saying in Cairo earlier Sunday that Israel was using the elections as an excuse not to withdraw troops from the West Bank.

But when asked upon his

arrival in Gaza, the leader would only say that Israel "must respect [the accord] as they respect all their commitments with all other countries."

Asked if he believed Israel had frozen the implementation of the Wye accord, Arafat told reporters in Gaza: "No doubt. The Israeli side has completely frozen everything."

On Dec. 2, Israel postponed the withdrawal of troops from parts of the West Bank as outlined in the Wye River agreement until the Palestinians fulfil several conditions.

Israel withdrew in November from two per cent of the West Bank under the Wye accord and was slated to pull out of 11 per

cent more in two phases by the end of January.

The Israeli demands include Palestinian agreement to stop saying they will declare a state on May 4, 1999, regardless of the state of the negotiations, to crack down on anti-Israeli incitement and rein-in Islamists.

Netanyahu said Friday that despite the Israeli election campaign if the Palestinians fulfil the conditions, Israel will carry out its part of the agreement signed on Oct. 23 at the White House.

The Palestinian cabinet repeated its insistence on Friday that it will declare a state in May.

An Arafat spokesman, Nabil Abu Rdeineh, called

on the United States Sunday to pressure Israel to continue fulfilling its part of the Wye agreement despite the elections.

"We signed an agreement with the Israeli government and not with the Likud Party," Abu Rdeineh said in reference to Netanyahu's party.

In a sign of the tensions, Israeli soldiers shot rubber-coated metal bullets and tear gas Sunday at Palestinians who threw rocks at them and Israeli vehicles near the Kalandia refugee camp north of Jerusalem.

The clashes broke out after an Israeli police car hit and injured a Palestinian in the refugee camp, witnesses said.

Panel finds Israel, Lebanon guilty of ceasefire violations

NAQOURA (AFP) — The international committee monitoring the ceasefire between Israel and Lebanon said Sunday both parties were guilty of violating the truce terms after holding an emergency holiday meeting.

The committee found that on Dec. 22 an Israeli missile killed a mother and six children when it went off course and slammed into a house in the Bekaa valley.

It also said a Lebanese armed group had fired approximately 40 rockets into northern Israel the next day, injuring 16 civilians and damaging buildings and vehicles.

The group condemned the incidents, which it said violated the April 1996 agreement between Israel and Lebanon not to target civilians.

Committee members interrupted their Christmas holi-

days to hold an emergency meeting in view of the gravity of the two attacks.

The committee groups representatives from France, Israel, Lebanon, Syria and the United States.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu vowed to "respond" to the rocket attacks, claimed by the Hizbollah militia, prompting U.N. chief Kofi Annan to urge both sides to "put an end to the violence" and respect "the non-combatant status of civilians."

The Syrian and Iranian-backed Hizbollah spearheads efforts to end Israel's 20-year occupation of southern Lebanon, where it occupies a buffer zone to prevent cross-border attacks.

Twenty-two civilians have been killed in Lebanon this year, according to an AFP tally.

Regent: Sanctions humanly unacceptable, politically futile

(Continued from page 1)

"Our stand of solidarity with the Iraqi people does not arise out of pity; but is meant to convey a message to our Iraqi brethren that we are with them with both our heart and soul, defending their dignity as well as their right to free and respectable life," he added.

He also restated Jordan's rejection of the policy of economic sanctions against any state. "Let us agree from the outset that our solidarity with the Iraqi people and that our defending their basic rights is paramount to defending the people of any Arab country who might be subjected to aggression and suffering," he said.

On the use of force to resolve conflict, the Prince said: "We contend that it should be the last resort in accordance with the spirit and principle of U.N.

Charter, and only after all possible peaceful means have been exhausted."

He also reiterated Jordan's call for the elimination of all weapons of mass destruction.

"The inspection of weapons of mass destruction... should be compatible with certain criteria that specify the extent of adherence to such conventions and resolutions," he said.

He pointed out that the Middle East region is the only one that remains without a code of ethics governing multilateral and bilateral relations amongst its countries.

Prince Hassan reiterated his call to decrease the region's military spending. "Since 1991 the region has spent over \$300 billion on armament at a time when it was in a dire need to allocate this money in construction and human development," Prince Hassan said.

Iraq threatening to expel U.N. aid workers

(Continued from page 1)

Iraqi officials said that anti-aircraft gunners were prepared to open fire on U.S. and British warplanes patrolling no-fly zones over northern and southern Iraq.

"Violating Iraqi airspace is an aggression," Vice President Taha Yassin Ramadan told APTN Sunday.

"The so-called force of no-fly zones must end," he said.

"The so-called no-fly zones only exist in the British and American imagination."

Iraq has never recognised the zones and has occasionally confronted aircraft flying in the areas.

The United States and Britain have said that they will

continue to enforce the zones.

"Our pilots can act in self-defence if they feel threatened at any time," National Security Council spokesman P. J. Crowley said in Washington.

Iraq said that its anti-aircraft gunners drove off an attack Saturday by "enemy" warplanes.

Officials in Washington and London said that pilots patrolling the southern no-fly zone saw anti-aircraft fire in the distance, but were in no danger.

The United States, Britain and France set up the no-fly zones in 1991-92 to halt air attacks against Kurdish rebels in the north and Shiite Muslim rebels in the south.

Smallest octuplet dies

HOUSTON (AP) — The smallest of the Chukwu octuplets died early Sunday from heart and lung failure, a week after she was born weighing just 292 grammes.

Texas Children's Hospital announced that the baby, Chijindu Chidera, who was nicknamed Odera, was pronounced dead at 3:23 a.m.

She and her seven siblings had been in intensive care since her birth Dec. 20 as part of the world's first surviving set of octuplets. The first baby was born Dec. 8.

Odera was the fifth child born to Nkem Chukwu, a native of Nigeria, and her husband, Iyke Louis Udobi.

The baby's condition began to deteriorate significantly Saturday, when doctors moved her from a conventional ventilator to an oscillator in an effort to improve her blood oxygenation.

But her oxygen levels remained poor and her heart began to fail.

Medication and chest compressions were unsuccessful, the hospital said.

In a statement released Sunday through the hospital, the parents said: "We are very saddened by the passing of our beloved baby Odera. She is now safe with God in heaven and we remain most grateful to him for having blessed our lives with hers."

Ms. Chukwu and her husband and mother visited all eight babies for the first time on Saturday night, at about the

same time Odera's condition began to deteriorate, hospital officials said.

The other seven babies were in critical condition. The youngest, Gorom, was recovering from abdominal surgery Saturday to repair an intestinal perforation. Two — Ebuka and Ikem — remained on ventilators, but four others — Chidi, Echerem, Chima and Joke — were breathing on their own.

The mother, who had taken fertility drugs, was in stable condition Sunday morning, according to St. Luke's Episcopal Hospital.

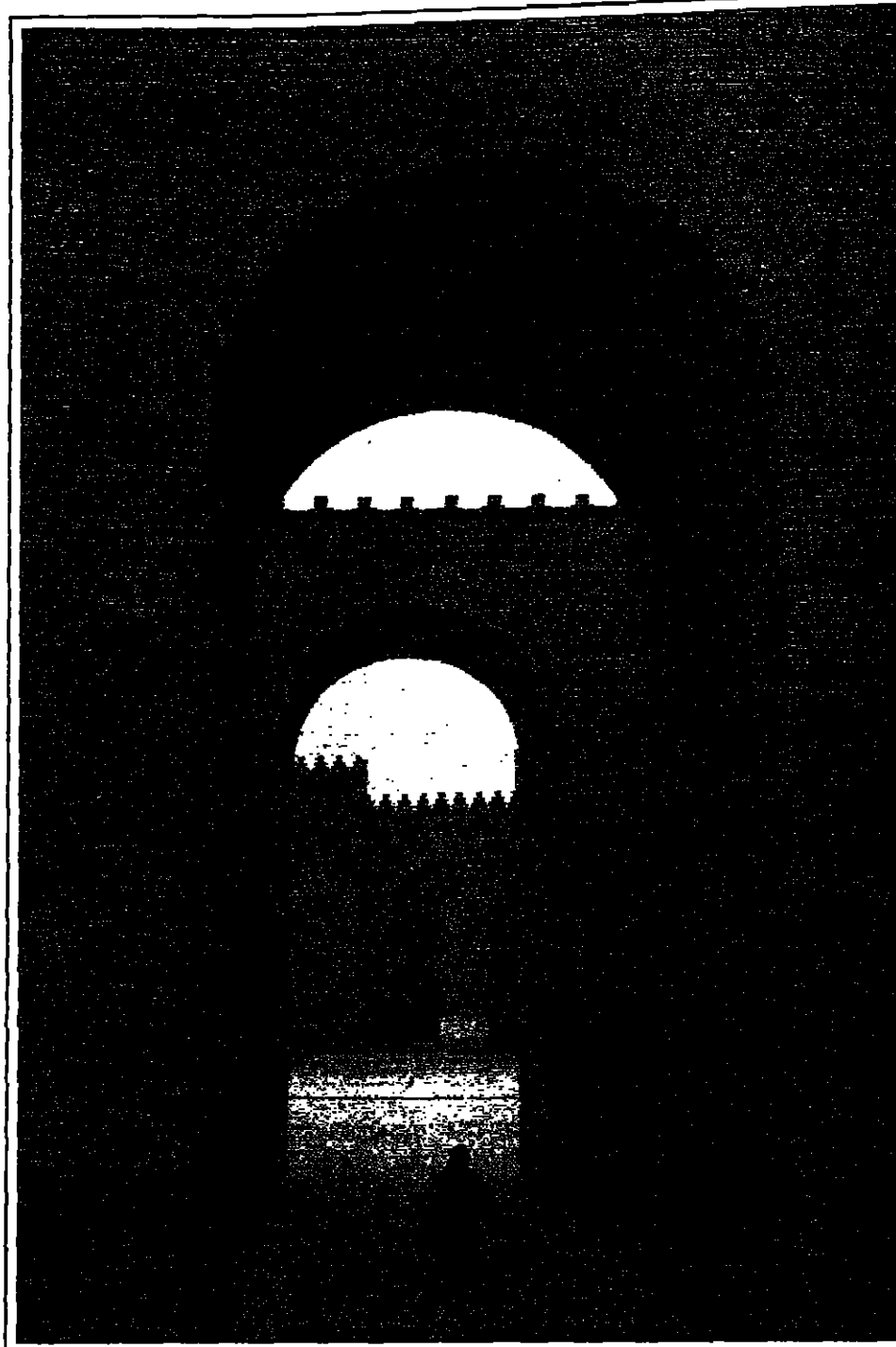
Few babies as small as Odera — or her siblings — survive more than a few hours after birth. She would have been the smallest baby born at Texas Children's to survive.

Dr. Patti Savrick, the octuplets' pediatrician, on Saturday said she was worried about Odera and that the girl was "literally on minute-to-minute care."

On Sunday, the parents thanked the doctors and hospital staff for trying "to help Odera in her battle for life against what turned out to be overwhelming obstacles."

"We also want to thank people all over the world for their prayers for our family in this special time in which we are so blessed by our eight babies, but so sad for the loss of little Odera," the parents said.

The largest of the babies weighed 765 grammes at birth.



DESERTED BY TOURISTS: An Iraqi woman walks past the entrance of the main temple at Iraq's most famous archaeological site Babylon on Sunday. The ancient site was crowded with foreign tourists before the Iraq crisis but is now deserted with just a few Iraqi tourists (Reuters photo)

Iraq demands all Arabs ignore U.N. trade embargo

BAGHDAD (AFP) — Iraq Sunday urged all Arab countries to violate U.N. sanctions slapped on the country and said there was no point holding an Arab summit if such a measure could not be agreed.

Iraqi Deputy Prime Minister Tariq Aziz called on political parties across the Arab World to pressure their governments into ignoring the embargo imposed on Baghdad after its August 1990 invasion of Kuwait.

"Whether they are in power or not, [parties] should urge their governments to take practical measures to lift the embargo," Aziz told the official INA news agency.

Aziz hailed political organisations across the Arab World for organising a series of pro-Iraq demonstrations in the aftermath of the Dec. 16 to 19 U.S. and British air strikes.

But he also called on the groups to "work from now on to put pressure on governments to break the embargo."

Iraqi deputies took the same message to a meeting of the Arab Parliamentary Union (APU) in Amman on Sunday, while Iraq's official press said an Arab decision to ignore the embargo should be made at a summit.

"If an Arab summit takes place, the minimum stand it

should take is a condemnation of the American and British position and action on the Arab level to break the embargo," said the Babel newspaper.

"If the summit is held purely for form's sake, it would be better not to hold it at all," said the daily, run by Iraqi President Saddam Hussein's son Uday.

The paper added that if Kuwait were to attend such a summit it would try to torpedo it and use its influence to ensure [the summit] did not take any resolutions not approved by its American masters."

APU decides to send parliamentarians to Iraq

(Continued from page 1)

"The aggression on Iraq represents a dangerous policy which is against international law and regional and international security," Fathi Sour, the head of the APU and speaker of Egypt's parliament, told the gathering.

The APU emergency meeting was hastily convened at the request of Jordan's Lower House of Parliament to rally

popular support for Iraq in the wake of widespread popular Arab frustration across the region against this month's strikes on Baghdad.

Sour said Arabs were angry at the "selective implementation of U.N. resolutions on Iraq to serve the interests of Washington and its allies."

He added that it was no longer acceptable that Israel be allowed to get away with possessing an arsenal of

weapons of mass destruction while Iraq is being punished.

"The international community should deal with the states of the Middle East equally; this double standard is unacceptable."

In addition to Jordan, delegations from Bahrain, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Egypt, Syria, Tunisia, Algeria, Djibouti, Iraq, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Mauritania, Yemen, Sudan

and Palestine attended the meeting.

Iraq earlier submitted a draft resolution urging Arab nations to ignore U.N. sanctions on Iraq and demanding that all foreign troops be pulled out of the Gulf.

The resolution was put before the APU meeting by a delegation headed by Hammedi, as about 200 members of Jordanian political parties and unions held a

sit-in to demand an end to the sanctions.

The demonstrators shouted anti-American slogans and waved banners saying any aggression on Iraq amounts to an attack on the entire Arab World.

At a press conference following the meeting Hammedi praised Jordan's initiative to call for the meeting, which he described as a historic move.

Netanyahu critic drops out, Likud lawmaker announces bid

(Continued from page 1)

The hard liners were also deeply disappointed by Netanyahu's signing of the Wye accord, which set the stage for three further withdrawals from the West Bank.

The hardliners feel that Netanyahu agreed to territorial concessions without secure enough guarantees that the Palestinians would crack down hard enough against terrorism.

Landau, a Likud veteran

with a Ph.D. in systems analysis from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, said that although he knew his chances of overtaking Netanyahu in the party's primaries were slim, he felt duty-bound to put the party back on the ideological course he says it has strayed from under the current premier's two-and-a-half year rule.

By Landau's side Sunday was former Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir, who has severely criticised Netanyahu

in recent interviews for destroying the Likud Party. Shamir, who left office in 1992 after losing to the late Yitzhak Rabin of Labour, threw his weight behind Landau, saying he was the most suitable candidate to lead the party and the country.

"Benjamin Netanyahu should be replaced," Shamir was quoted as saying in an interview with the daily Yediot Ahronot. "This isn't the Likud I knew as prime minister."

Landau, son of one of the founding fathers of the right-wing movement that gave birth to the Likud, said "no one says this party belongs to just one man." He alluded to criticism that Netanyahu was too high-handed and had strayed from traditional party ideology.

Likud, one of two main parties in Israeli politics, has been splintering.

Both Landau and Shamir made an appeal to Likud veterans — Dan Meridor and

Benny Begin who have broken away from the party to form their own factions against Netanyahu — to fight from within the fold.

Leaving a lengthy meeting with Meridor, who announced last week his candidacy as head of a new centrist party, Communications Minister Limor Livnat refused to state publicly whether or not she has decided to leave Netanyahu's coalition for Meridor's camp.

S. Arabia reportedly lobbies for postponement of meeting

(Continued from page 1)

Mubarak, meanwhile, launched a strong attack on Baghdad just as Saddam prepared to travel to Cairo for the Arab League meeting.

Egypt's opposition to U.S. and British air strikes should not be mistaken for support for the Iraqi government, Mubarak insisted in an interview to be published in

Monday's edition of the government daily Al-Gumhuriya.

"We opposed the air attack Britain and the United States launched against Iraq from the start because in the final reckoning it's the people of Iraq who pay the price," the Egyptian president said.

"We sympathise with the Iraqi people because we know that our brothers and our sons in this fraternal country can

do nothing about it and the regime in power is at the root of all the problems," he said.

"Egypt does not support this regime," Mubarak stressed.

In another development, Palestinian President Yasser Arafat, on a visit to Egypt, said Sunday that any Arab summit should focus on the situation in Iraq rather than the Middle East peace

process because the sufferings of the Iraqi people were "unbearable."

Arafat, speaking here during a press conference with Abdul Meguid, said Israel's freeze on the Wye River agreement was an "important" subject for the League to consider.

"But given the circumstances, the Arab nations are mostly concerned with our

Iraqi brothers and we are as well," Arafat said.

"The suffering of the Iraqi people is unbearable and it must be put to an end," he said.

Abdul Meguid said Arafat would not take part in Wednesday's meeting of League foreign ministers to consider Yemen's request for an emergency Arab summit on the situation in Iraq.



'Monica' candy launched

KIEV (R) — A Ukrainian politician Thursday launched a brand of candy called "Monica," saying it was named to commemorate President Clinton's scandalous affair with Monica Lewinsky, the Daily newspaper reported.

The 23-year-old, Oksana Kaduk, as saying, she had been inspired to create the new brand by "the sad story of Bill and Monica."

The rectangular sweets will be sold in colorful boxes decorated with a big green apple. The entrepreneur said an Israeli company had already ordered a large lot of "Monicas" at a wholesale price of four hryvnias per box.

'Gummy Granny' mails her teeth

LONDON (R) — A British grandmother was such a hurry to post her Christmas cards she did not notice that wedged between them were her new, false teeth. Postal workers said the 74-year-old woman, who has not been named, appeared at a post office in Wilton, Northeast of London, asking if anyone had found the 320 dentures after she realised she had posted them.

"She just came in here and she posted her teeth, so she reckons," said astonished postman Dave Lee. "She was caused a flurry of gummy granny jokes in British media but she was not amused."

93-year-old woman seeks Christmas in jail for speeding

LOS ANGELES (R) — A 93-year-old California woman hauled before a judge for speeding asked to be put in jail over Christmas rather than pay a \$100 fine, a newspaper reported Thursday.

Ada Beck was allegedly going 60 mph in a 45 mph zone near her home town of Victorville, a desert community 60 miles north of Los Angeles. She told the Los Angeles Times that she asked the judge, "Can you put me in jail, if they'll feed me, and let me lay it (the fine) off?" The judge refused to send Beck to jail and instead sentenced her to 20 hours of community service.

Actress awarded \$230,000 over nude Internet photos

LOS ANGELES (R) — A federal judge has awarded TV actress Alyssa Milano \$230,000 because an Internet website posted nude photographs of her without her permission, court papers showed Wednesday.

U.S. District Judge Ronald Lew ordered the website owner, John Lindgren, to pay Milano the money. He also barred Lindgren from posting more nude photos of the former "Who's the Boss" star on his website and ordered him to pay \$8,200 for her attorney fees.

Lindgren, who lives in Minnesota, did not respond to the lawsuit Milano filed against him and Lew issued a default judgement.

Volunteer stole charity toys?

NEW SMYRNA BEACH (R) — Detectives investigating the theft of toys collected for the poor found two dozen missing ones wrapped and under the Christmas tree of a coordinator of the charity drive, police said Wednesday.

Donald Arthur Dwyer, 61, who for several years has coordinated "Toys for Tots" in this coastal town Northeast of Orlando, was arrested Tuesday and charged with grand theft, Gary Davidson, spokesman for the Volusia County Sheriff's Department, said.

Investigators said thousands of dollars' worth of toys were missing. Dwyer allegedly picked up residents' donated toys and kept the ones he wanted for his family.

16 tourists

SAVA — AP — Yasser Arafat Monday said he was planning to launch a new brand of candy called "Monica," saying it was named to commemorate President Clinton's scandalous affair with Monica Lewinsky, the Daily newspaper reported.

Palestinian ge

life sentence for driving bombe

TEL AVIV (AP) — A Palestinian man was sentenced to life in prison Monday for driving a bomb-laden car into a crowded shopping center in Jerusalem.

Iraqi satellite T

back on the air

VIENNA (AP) — Iraq's satellite Channel 5 was back on the air Monday after a two-day shutdown.

Tibi's mover

to run for Knes

TEL AVIV (AP) — A former Israeli cabinet minister said Monday he was planning to run for the Knesset in the next elections.

Five die in Iran

ship blast in Gu

TEHRAN (R) — Five people were killed Monday in an explosion on board a tanker ship in the Persian Gulf.

Sudan: NGOs

serving hostile political ends

KHARTOUM (AFP) — Sudan on Monday accused western non-governmental organizations (NGOs) of serving hostile political ends.